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## Rockingham voters mark ballots for change

Dunbar, North, Cowan elected to Rockingham Selectboard; Paul Obuchowski returned to UHS #27 school board

By Robert F. Smith The Commons

ROCKINGHAM—Town Meeting voting on April 1 and 2 brought several changes to school boards and the Selectboard. It was a particularly rough night for those seeking reelection.

The incumbents Rockingham School Board chair

Priscilla Lambert; Deborah Wright, who was also running for a one-year Selectboard seat; and Bellows Falls Union High School board chair Jason Terry -- were all defeated by large margins.

John Dunbar was elected for the first time to one of two oneyear seats on the Selectboard, with a commanding 544 votes. ■ SEE ROCKINGHAM ELECTION, A4

## 'Nobody needs a 7,000 square foot house anymore'

A state program encourages 'mom and pop' landlords to develop affordable housing

#### By Ellen Pratt The Commons

BRATTLEBORO—A state pandemic-era program aimed at encouraging "mom-and-pop landlords" to create affordable housing is set to launch a second



round of grant funding this spring

With millions of dollars to be awarded statewide, the Vermont Housing Improvement Program (VHIP) provides these local housing developers up to \$50,000 per unit for the rehabilitation and construction of rental apartments.

VHIP was launched in 2022 to address the state's declining quality of rental units and to provide suitable housing for Vermonters experiencing homelessness. The program requires landlords to rent at affordable, fair market prices as established by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, and to work with local coordinated entry lead organizations, such as Groundworks Collaborative in ■ SEE VHIP FINANCING, A5



Some of the 1,700 girls entered in the annual Girls on the Run 5K Run/Walk pass the starting line in 2012.

Vermont's chapter of Girls on the Run celebrates 25 years of cultivating young hearts, minds, and spirits

By Victoria Chertok The Commons

RATTLEBORO-In 1999, when her daughters were young, Nancy Heydinger says she "wanted to find a way to ensure that they would grow up loving themselves, feeling

a lot of opportunities for girls that were solely for girls." That was the impetus for

her founding Girls on the Run Vermont (GOTRVT) that year. Since the Vermont chapter began in 1999, more

than 30,000 girls in the Green Mountain State have participated. complete." "I wanted them to celebrate in Charlotte, North Carolina, in



## seeks second term

No challengers as yet, but U.S. representative says she is working hard to help Democrats retake the House

#### By Joyce Marcel The Commons

BRATTLEBORO-There are times when Vermont likes to go all in, so in 2022, when it decided to send its first female to Congress, it chose Becca Balint, an idealistic lesbian politician, a progressive Democrat, a Brattleboro resident, a mother of two, a former teacher, and the former president pro tem of the Vermont Senate.

"It's been an incredible joy and a privilege," Balint ■ SEE BALINT, A3

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to know that what they communicated was of value, and to believe that they could make an important impact in their com-munities and in our world," the Vernon resident told The Commons.

So Heydinger looked at opportunities for her daughters and found that "there weren't

1996, and since then more than 2.5 million girls have taken part nationwide in a full life-lessons curricula for girls that includes cultivating a love of movement.

Barker recognized a need for girls to have their own spaces, noting that there were already plenty of spaces for men and ■ SEE GOTRVT TURNS 25, A2

Rachel Desautels of Williston, left, succeeded Nancy Heydinger of Vernon as executive director of Girls on the Run Vermont in 2018. Heydinger stepped down after nearly two decades of leading the nonprofit program.

## A year after tragedy, Groundworks looks forward



all things to all people,' says Libby Bennett, the nonprofit's new leader. 'The needs have grown a lot more complex.'

'We've learned we cannot be

#### By Kevin O'Connor VtDigger

BRATTLEBORO-Five years ago, Groundworks Collaborative — a nonprofit whose tagline promises "basic needs met with dignity" — hoped to help a rising number of people sleeping on the streets by unveiling plans for a \$3.3 million drop-in center and overnight shelter.

Thinking back to that moment, we thought, 'This is the way," Libby Bennett, then in

velopment and communications office, recalled of the overall

No one foresaw the seismic shift that would come with the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic, the expansion of the state's emergency housing voucher program, or the killing of Leah Rosin-Pritchard, a Groundworks social worker, on April 3, 2023, allegedly by a resident of its longerstay Morningside House.

■ SEE GROUNDWORKS, A8

A birdhouse sits across the street from the nonprofit Groundworks Collaborative's drop-in center and overnight shelter on South Main Street in Brattleboro.

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charge of the organization's detrajectory.

## GOTRVT turns 25

She wanted to change that.

She hoped to help girls find their

voices and encourage them to

lift one another up rather than

In 1999, the first team of 15

girls was at Vernon Elementary

School and included Heydinger's

two daughters, Katy and Caroline,

From there, GOTRVT spread

throughout Windham County

and kept growing until it covered

the entire state of Vermont. This

year, there are teams at almost ev-

ery school in Windham Southeast

the transformation of the lives

of girls all around the state,"

Heydinger said. "I have drawers

full of letters from girls and their

parents, guardians, and grandpar-

ents telling me how the program

of memories of seeing the beam-

ing faces of girls as they ran,

walked, or skipped across the

finish line at the end-of-season

Girls on the Run operates for

10 weeks beginning every March,

and meets after school twice a

week for 90 minutes. The cur-

riculum is designed so that each

lesson is self-contained but builds

Lessons are on topics such as

positive self-talk, where students

learn to switch from negative to

positive thinking, as well as man-

aging emotions and navigating

cessful is the curriculum. It keeps

evolving to address issues of the

day," says Heydinger. "The physical piece of the pro-

gram is so important — to get

these girls out there and get them moving," she said. "The idea is

not to turn them into track stars,

but to help them gain apprecia-

Heydinger adds that "move-

ment activities" include "vari-

ous forms of fitness, like running,

doing laps, walking, skipping,

while learning about [important

Elizabeth Catlin says, "One of

the concepts is 'star power' —

your inner essence, your inner

light — and learning things that

you can do to activate it or things

GOTR hosts two 5K runs each

year, in Essex and Manchester.

on Saturday, June 1, at the

Champlain Valley Exposition and

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As Dummerston coach

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"One reason GOTR is so suc-

"I've been lucky to have seen

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Supervisory Union.

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GOTR 5K.

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The Commons is a nonprofit commu-nity newspaper published since 2006 by Vermont Independent Media, Inc. a nonprofit corporation under section 501(c)3 of the federal tax code.

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an emcee.

U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy endorsed Girls on the Run in his May 2023 report, calling it "an activity-based program that nurtures the mental well-being of youth."

FROM SECTION FRONT

The report, "Physical Activity: An Untapped Resource to Address Our Nation's Mental Health Crisis among Children and Adolescents" went on to say that "girls who were the least active when they started the program increased their overall physical activity by 40%.

It also noted that "97% of girls said that they learned critical life skills, including resolving conflict, helping others, or making intentional decisions, and 85% reported improvements in confidence, caring, competence, character development, or connection to others."

## She said that her "heart is full f memories of seeing the beam-ng faces of girls as they ran, accessible

For its 25th anniversary, GOTRVT has started an alumni scholarship award in honor of Rick Hashagen, who retired from the board of directors last year after 20 years.

"We awarded two girls' scholarships of \$1,000 each to help fund their future education, and this year we're giving out two scholarships of \$2,500 each, renewable for up to 3 years and up to \$10,000," said Rachel Desautels, GOTRVT's current executive director.

"The volunteer coaches are a big part of the success of GOTR," she said. They undergo a background check and are trained in person before they begin coaching. The coaches don't have to pay for anything since all materials are provided by GOTR.

The cost of participation in GOTRVT is \$130 per person, but Desautels noted that this fee is partially subsidized by the organization and that "the true cost per girl is closer to approximately

Even so, Desautels said, no one is turned away for lack of funds. Moreover, she said, GOTRVT

is "an inclusive program that welcomes nonbinary, transgender, and gender-fluid participants to join.'

At each practice, volunteer GOTRVT coaches "encourage and inspire participants to live fearlessly and realize their limitless potential. Coaches' willingness to listen and be present reminds participants that they, and their words, are worthy, The Essex 5K will take place according to the organization's website.

For this special anniversary

## It was unlike anything I had experienced at that age'

Coach and board member Theresa Glabach of Girls on the Run sees her fundraiser as more than raising money — it's a way to share the organization's values statewide

RATTLEBORO— Theresa Glabach, Girls on the Run Vermont board member, coaches the program at Putney Central School alongside physical education teacher Maddie Harlow. Glabach spoke with The

Commons recently. Here is an excerpt from the conversation:

victoria chertok: What was it about GOTRVT that drew you in initially?

THERESA GLABACH: I first came to Girls on the Run as a SoleMate [described on the GOTR website (gotrvt.org/ solemates) as a "community made up of passionate people raising money for Girls on the Run"]

I had gone through a personal journey to overhaul my health and wellness. Along the way, I

- the kid who hated running! - ended up becoming a runner and completed the  $4 \times 4 \times 48$ Charity Challenge, where you run 4 miles every 4 hours for 48 hours straight. In between the runs, you could rest, eat, and do anything you'd like. As wild as it sounds to most people, it was one of the most incredible experiences.

So much of what I learned and was celebrating ended up being perfectly aligned with GOTR.

From there, I had the opportunity to volunteer at the GOTR 5K in Manchester. Being surrounded by hundreds of girls bursting with excitement and pride was amazing, and then I got on the course.

There were girls everywhere cheering each other on, giving me high fives and encouragement, or slowing down to support others who just needed a friend.

It was unlike anything I had experienced at that age, and I knew GOTRVT was for me!

**v.c.**: What's it like being a volunteer coach in Putney this year?

girls, watching them experience sheer joy as they run together, learn together, and support each other while practicing tools that will help them grow up to be confident, courageous, and strong in-dependent thinkers and leaders," said Heydinger.



Theresa Glabach is raising money for Girls on the Run Vermont by visiting each town in the state and running at least 1 mile. Here, she chronicled her visit to Greensboro with a selfie posted to social media.

**T.G.:** Being a coach in Putney is incredibly rewarding! We have a wonderful group of 14 GOTR girls (for grades 3–5) and seven Heart & Sole girls (for grades 6–8), many of whom are returning from last year. We have a lot of silly days — the girls really engage with the curriculum, and I love seeing how much they grow in such a short period of time.

#### v.c.: Why do you volunteer as a board member?

T.G.: By serving on the board of directors, I'm able to help shape and spread this organization because we all deserve to have the skills and confidence to pursue our dreams. Girls on the Run is everything I didn't know I needed at that age, and I want to make sure the girls of Vermont have access to this program.

**v.c.**: Tell me about SoleMates and your personal challenge of running at least 1 mile in every Vermont town.

**T.G.**: I love being a SoleMate. I'm actually in the middle of a

#### she added.

"Last year, the girls raised \$195,000 for GOTR, which is remarkable," Desautels contin-

SoleMates challenge right now! As a SoleMate you can [make anything a benefit for GOTR], like a birthday fundraiser, a challenge you want to accomplish, or a race you want to complete. If it is for a challenge or race, raising money for GOTR is a great motivator for the days when you might not want to get out to train or you might want to call it quits.

Right now, I'm attempting to run at least 1 mile in every Vermont town within the Girls on the Run season and beat the current time record in place.

For me, I see this one as more than a fundraiser. By doing it during the season, I am able to actively apply the lessons we facilitate, see the way it applies to me, and better talk about the lessons with the girls. I'm able to literally spread GOTR to every town, and meet people who are either connected or not.

Plus, I get to do something that's really hard — just like the girls who are learning about themselves and working toward completing the end-ofseason 5K!

of families has been so wonderful," she said. "I feel such privilege every year to meet the girls on the field.'

The

vertising support, and through support of charitable foundations

The paper is published weekly, with the exceptions of the weeks of July 4 and Dec. 25.

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We especially invite responses to ma terial that appears in the paper. We do not publish unsigned or anon-

ymous letters, and we only very rarely withhold names for other pieces. When space is an issue, our priority is to run contributions that have not yet appeared in other publications.

Please check with the editor before writing essays or other original sub-missions of substance. Email: voices@ commonsnews.org.

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is open to public participation. The Manchester 5K will be held at Dana L. Thompson Memorial Park on Saturday, June 8, and public spectators are welcome.

Both 5Ks have a sponsor village that includes activities, games, and giveaways, as well as musical entertainment with a DJ and

year, Heydinger has returned to the organization, serving as a cocoach at the Dummerston School with Elizabeth Catlin, a GOTR board member who has been coaching for 13 years.

"I feel incredibly fortunate to once again experience the gifts that this program brings to the



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"We are so fortunate to have Grace Cottage and its excellent care team so nearby." ~ Greg Underwood, Jamaica, VT

#### Building community

Each season, GOTR teams complete a Community Impact Project to help their respective towns

The project is determined by the girls through a series of lessons where they brainstorm ideas, discuss the possibilities, compromise, and determine a final idea to implement during a lesson toward the end of the season.

Each season, the girls have the option to participate in the Scholarship Drive, a peer-to-peer fundraiser.

Wendy Johnson, a 15-year veteran of the program and Dover School GOTRVT volunteer coach, wrote in an email to The Commons, "Our girls really love the program and thrive. So much growth — it is amazing to watch.

This year, the team's community impact project was to create a little free library at Dover School.

"It all came together effortlessly," Johnson said. "A coach's partner built the box, the girls painted, donated books, announced at all-school sing (which brought in more books), wrote the directions, reached out to the local paper ... they couldn't have been more in charge of this project."

She said that many of the girls 'want to be able to participate to give back to this program so that others can join in future seasons," Desautels said.

"They can collect funds either online [or in] cash or checks, but they are not to go door to door soliciting to those they do not know, to protect their safety,"



ued. "The girls understand the value of giving back to their community and are excited to utilize the skills they've learned during lessons."

#### **From coach** to director

In 2019, Heydinger decided it was time to retire. She stayed on for a few months to help with the transition after helping select Desautels as the new executive director.

Desautels loved having her own daughter in GOTRVT. "I had the privilege to be a coach at Williston for five years and I had the luxury of coaching my daughter for two of those seasons," she said. "It was such a joy to experience that with my kiddo and watch her blossom.

Desautels said that 1,800 participated in GOTRVT last year, and this year will likely see a similar number. There are 183 from Windham County alone, which Desautels says "represents the third highest participant count of all 14 counties this season."

Pre-pandemic, the numbers were a bit higher, and GOTRVT has learned lessons from Covid.

We had to cancel our programs in 2020, which was heartbreaking. We came back in 2021, and it looked different," said Desautels.

She added that "2022 was the first year we came back with our pre-pandemic model, where everything was in-person again."

#### 'It's a joy factory'

Elizabeth Catlin said that working with GOTRVT has been a big part of her life over the past 15 years.

"At Dummerston School, the support of the school community and the administration has been unwavering and the support

Catlin got involved after her eldest daughter, Lila, took part in the program as a third grader. She soon realized that she wanted to be involved, so she began volunteering in 2010.

"I found it to be such a deeply connected and satisfying means of living my feminist values, she said.

She recounted what she de-scribed as "our family's *Chariots* of Fire moment.'

"My daughter Lila was so determined and committed to running that 5K on her little legs, she said. "My husband, Jared, and I were on the finish line when she burst into tears and was overwhelmed."

"The energy at those 5Ks is infectious," Catlin added. "It's a joy factory. It brings out the best, with the coaches and volunteers there is so much positivity."

Catlin's younger daughter, Lucy, also took part in GOTRVT.

"Lucy was moving toward becoming a mean girl in elementary school, but in GOTR she was paired with different people and she developed more emotionally, and now she's the nicest person on the planet!" her mother said.

Catlin said she loves that the program is for girls from third to fifth grade, "before the social stuff becomes really intense. There is a companion program called Heart and Sole for sixth through eighth graders."

Catlin reflects on the need to recruit good coaches for this program. "The chance to be a GOTRVT coach makes such a tremendous difference in your life. The curriculum — you're learning alongside the girls — is very powerful."

"I'm so grateful to Nancy Heydinger for bringing [GOTR] to Vermont," Catlin added, calling her "a visionary [who] changed things for girls in our state.

"It's an extraordinary thing," she said.

Girls on the RunVermont is looking for coaches and new board members from Windham County. Contact Rachel Desautels at rachel@ girlsontherunvermont.org, or 802-871-5664. For more information on Girls on the Run Vermont, visit gotrvt.org.

## Balint

told The Commons when she announced her re-election campaign late last month. "And it feels like an amazing outgrowth of the work that I did at first as a teacher and then as a state senator. To really focus on how to improve lives for people. So that's, by far, the most exciting opportunity for me — to try to make some progress on the issues that really matter to people in Brattleboro and across the state.

But she entered the 117th Congress which Ohio Republican Mike Turner, the chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, has called the "chaos caucus." And Balint agrees with Turner.

"It is no secret that this has been a Congress for the record books," Balint said. "And not in a good way. We started the chaos in January. We had to go 15 rounds for a speaker.'

That speaker, California Republican Kevin McCarthy, lasted only 269 days, the thirdshortest speakership in history. Then he retired from the House. His replacement was Mike Johnson, a Republican from Louisiana.

'We got another speaker and just before this break, we had [Georgia Republican] Marjorie Taylor Greene introducing a vacate-the-chair motion to get rid of Speaker Johnson," Balint said. 'So, more of the same, right? More of the same chaos?'

Balint does not believe Greene is serious about impeaching Johnson.

"It's possible that she never ever does anything with this and that it was just a fundraising strategy," Balint said. "She dropped it in the last few hours before a two-week break, and she knew nothing could happen. So it sure looks to all of us that this is just a ploy to raise money over the break, and more games. Because they don't have the votes. They don't have the votes to elect a more extreme person. We've been through this.

#### **Face-to-face** with cynicism

Balint serves on the House Judiciary Committee with Greene and other far-right MAGA Republicans. She said the cynicism can be demoralizing.

"It's certainly been frustrating for me to sit in Judiciary every day and see the cynicism, the meanness of spirit, and the constant attacks on the trans community and their parents and their al-Balint said. lies,"

"That has been so, so painful to watch, both in Judiciary and on the floor of the House," she continued. "This was a concerted effort they made; the GOP tried to settle on an issue that would rile

minority whip], and Pete Aguilar [D-Calif., the chair of the House Democratic Caucus] is that they are people who really listened to the rank-and-file. We have regular meetings with them."

Balint feels she has even made headway on the Judiciary Committee.

"I feel like I've been able to really show my leadership," she said. "We're pushing back on the outrageous ways that they're attacking. Whether it's reproductive rights, or the rights of immigrants and migrants, or the queer and trans community, I feel like I am making a difference there. And I'm getting a name for myself in the caucus as someone who is a workhorse and not a show horse.'

Balint is also proud of the work another of her key issues.

"I cannot wait until Democrats are back in the majority so that we can really invest in medical support at the level that we need," she said. "I was able to secure \$11 million to fund 16 projects around the state. I know Vermonters hear a lot about the dysfunction in Congress, but my team works really hard to make sure that they work closely with the Appropriations Committee to get those projects funded."

Another high point for Balint was being able to help almost 1,500 Vermonters with issues related to security or immigration issues.

"And many people needed help with looking for resources after that terrible flooding this summer," she said.

Balint and her staff have also formed a strong working relationship with Vermont Senators Peter Welch and Bernie Sanders. Earmarks are local projects specifically targeted to receive federal money, or "Vermont taxpayer dollars coming back to Vermont," as Welch said.

And, this year, Balint found \$1.5 million for Grace Cottage Hospital. The little hospital in Townshend is planning a new, \$20 million clinic to replace the existing Grace Cottage Family

Health buildings. "All along Route 30 from Brattleboro up to towns like Jamaica, we know that there are rural health care needs that are met so wonderfully by Grace Cottage," Balint said. "It's such a resource for so many of those Vermonters living on those dirt roads up there. And there are a lot of elderly folks who get their service at Grace Cottage.

#### Israel, and Ukraine

In February, Balint and some of her Democratic colleagues made a stealth trip to Israel to get

#### FROM SECTION FRONT

- that someone from Windham County could win statewide.

She noted that the campaign "engaged a lot of young voters around the state. So the bulk of where our money goes is in organizing. And you have to pay people, you know. That's really important to us."

During her first run for Congress, Balint became collateral damage when a corrupt group of left-wing cryptocurrency financiers unaffiliated with her campaign gave more than \$1 million to a political action committee (PAC) unrelated to the candidate. The money paid for a blitz of television and direct mail ads — ads that she could not control or stop. "We didn't know any of the

folks who were engaged with our campaign," she said. "It was spent outside of the campaign in support of me, but I had no control over it. I wasn't in charge of the message. I wasn't in charge of what kind of pieces of mail were going out."

As a result, "a lot of Vermonters were very frustrated with the kind of mail that was coming from organizations that I have no control over," Balint said. "That is why we need campaign finance reform."

This time around, she said she is taking precautions. For starters, "We're not tak-

ing any crypto money," Balint said. Nor will the campaign take money from corporate donors or from corporate PACs.

"We're doing everything that we can to run a campaign that's funded by the small-dollar donors," she said.

While she campaigns in Vermont, Balint is also campaigning in other states for other Democratic Party candidates.

"One of the things that's so important to me is that it is absolutely not just about my race," Balint said. "It's also about making sure that we have the numbers to be able to flip the House.'

Otherwise, she said, "we are not going to be able to get the work done that needs to be done, like housing and investments in mental health, in climate action, and of course, reproductive rights.

Among those candidates are the first trans woman running for Congress: Sarah McBride from Delaware.

"She's become a friend, and I love supporting her," Balint said. 'She's come up through the state legislature. And she's been in an incredibly effective elected official and legislator," she added.

Balint has been working on some campaigns through the Equality PAC, an organization that supports "people from the LGBTQ community across the



U.S. Rep. Becca Balint, left, and Andrea Seaton, Senior Director of Development, Marketing & Community Relations for Grace Cottage Family Health & Hospital in Townshend, look at the plans for a \$20 million expansion of Grace Cottage's primary care clinic during an April 1 news conference.

ahead, in flipping the House in 2024. Because that will mean investments in housing, in mental health support, in reproductive rights, in expanding the Child Tax Credit — which we know works to bring millions of children out of poverty."

Meanwhile, she reflects on the "real consequences to having a Democratic majority. We saw that in the huge infrastructure bill that we were able to get passed. So it becomes very tangible to me when I focus on how productive we can be."

Balint said she has a good team ready to support her efforts in Congress.

This is a piece that I think a lot of folks don't realize," she said. "When you're a member of Congress, you are only as successful as the team around you. And I have a terrific team — not just in Vermont, but also in D.C.



well together," Balint said, adding that "they understand that their most important job is serv-

The team members "work individually," she continued. "As a group, they crack me up. That's a lot of how I keep my spirits up — through people who



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#### Custodians

Windham Northeast Supervisory Union has several open full time Custodian Positions; Rockingham School District and Bellows Falls Union High School District.

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> Rockingham School District Please send resumes to: Rick Schuhmann at rick.schumann@wnesu.com Bellows Falls Union High District Please send resumes to: Jeff Potter at Jeffrey.potter@wnesu.com



up the base, and they settled on beating up on trans kids and their families. And so that has been one of the most painful things to be pushing back against, week after week

Not only does this represent base cynicism, Balint said, it represents real cowardice on the part of many Republicans.

"I see my colleagues across the aisle, many of whom I know on a personal basis, and many of them know that Trump and Trumpism is bad for their party," Balint said. "It's bad for Congress. It's bad for the country. And they can't seem to find the courage to stand up against it. That certainly been incredibly challenging." And the last six months, "deal-

ing with the Israel and Gaza war, of course, have been profoundly painful and challenging for so many of us in Congress," she said.

#### High points of the first term

As difficult as the 117th Congress has been, Balint is enthusiastically positive about her time in Washington.

"It's really been an honor to serve Vermont in Congress," she said. "It has been an incredible joy and a privilege to really focus on how to improve lives for people."

Recently, Balint introduced a bill that would, if passed, pour money into housing construction across the country.

"By far, the most exciting opportunity for me is to try to make some progress on the issues that really matter," she said. "As we all well know, we have a housing crisis. And I was so excited to be able to introduce my Community Housing Act, and feel like I've really planted a flag in the ground about the level of investment needed for housing." Despite Congressional chaos,

Balint, part of the leadership of both the Equality Caucus and the Progressive Caucus, has managed to make some inroads on the national stage.

"I'm able to have real conversations with the leaders of both those caucuses," she said. "They then interface with Democratic leadership. What's been terrific about this leadership team of Hakeem Jeffries [D-N.Y., the House minority leader], us to really overcome what so Katherine Clark [D-Mass., the many people said was impossible

some firsthand information about what was happening.

"As difficult as this is, I'm very clear, having spent time in Israel and in the West Bank, that Netanyahu and this extremist government has shown utter disregard for the lives of Palestinians," Balint said. "And it has to stop.'

She said that she is "clear that we need an immediate ceasefire" and the release of all the hostages kidnapped from Israel on Oct. 7, 2023.

"And ultimately, the way for people to secure peace and security for Palestinians and Israelis, [is that] we need a two-state solution," said Balint, who believes most Vermonters agree with her.

Her constituents "want me to do my homework, and they want me to think carefully and deeply about this issue," she said. "And I'm doing just that."

Right now, the MAGA Republicans are holding back approval for additional funding for Ukraine as deals with the start of a third year of a brutal invasion by Russia. Balint wants to see that funding released.

"That has been a very troubling development," Balint said. "The Republicans have become apologists for Putin. And we know that every day that goes by when we are not supplying Ukraine is another day that Putin is celebrating and planning his next move.<sup>2</sup>

She said that seasoned Democrats and Republicans "cannot believe that this is where we are, that a major party in the United States is protecting an au-tocrat. It's shocking."

#### Campaigning

At the moment, no one has thrown a hat in the ring to challenge Balint; people have until May to file. This might be the first uncontested race she has ever run. But she is still fundraising to pay for television ads, mailers, buttons, and other campaign merchandise — but, most of all, for staff salaries.

"We know from our first campaign that the way that we were really able to win was that we had an incredible get-out of the organizing team on the ground," Balint said. "That's what enabled

country" and which was very supportive of her first race.

A "sleeper" Senate race that Balint is watching closely is Andy Kim's race in New Jersey. "He and I became friends, and it looks like he is going to be successful," Balint said. "He would be the first Korean-American in the Senate. He is someone who inspires me."

#### What's ahead?

What can Vermonters expect if Balint is elected to a second term?

"Well, first and foremost, I focus on the work," Balint said. "And I understand that if I lose heart, if I become cynical, then I can't do the work that needs to be done to honestly bring this country back from the brink of losing our democracy.'

She predicted that she will "need to focus my energy on the opportunities that we have

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Pay is \$16.50-\$18.00 an hour.

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## ECO AmeriCorps seeks applicants

Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) is seeking applicants for the Environmental Careers and Opportunities (ECO) AmeriCorps program. The program provides ECO AmeriCorps members with opportunities to explore conservation careers and gain technical skills to protect Vermont's environment.

"Since 2015, 243 ECO AmeriCorps members have helped partners with proj-ects across the state," DEC Commissioner Jason Batchelder said in a news release. "These rising environmental leaders have committed over 400,000 hours of service to improve water quality, increase climate resiliency, reduce waste, and conserve our natural resources."

DEC will accept 23 fulltime members to serve from September 2024 to August

MONTPELIER-The 2025. The deadline to ap- Bowman. "Being a member ply is Friday, May 10. Highly motivated individuals with a background in environmental conservation or education, natural or agricultural sciences, environmental studies, engineering, government or policy, communications or outreach event planning, or other related fields are encouraged to apply.

Members are paired with host sites statewide and serve under their supervision. Over the past 10 years, sites have ranged from municipalities, conservation districts, and solid waste management districts to other state departments and nonprofits. Sites offer meaningful projects, support, a workspace, tools, and supplies.

"With our partners, ECO AmeriCorps members help strengthen local communities and foster environmental stewardship," said ECO AmeriCorps Program Supervisor Dustin

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27

allows vou to build your network, confidence, and skills on projects you care about. Our alumni truly leave a lasting, collective, and positive impact on Vermont's communities and environment."

Members receive a total living stipend of \$26,000. Upon successful completion of 1,700 hours, members are eligible for a Segal AmeriCorps Education Award of \$7,395. Other benefits include health insurance, child care assistance, training, support, peer network, and student loan forbearance during the term of service.

ECO AmeriCorps is funded in part through an AmeriCorps state grant prothe Corporation for National Bowman at **Dustin.Bowman@** Vermont.gov with any questions.

## Rockingham election

Bonnie North, who is giving up her three-year seat on the board, was elected to the other one-year seat with 313 votes.

Wright got 148 votes, and candidates Jamey Berrick and Stanley Talstra got 180 and 67 votes, respectively.

The open three-year Selectboard seat was won by Rick Cowan, who ran unopposed and got 576 votes. Cowan was voted unanimously by the board to serve as Chair, replacing longtime chair Peter Golec.

Golec has said that this will be his last year on the Selectboard after serving over 15 years, many of those as Chair.

"I think the Town Meeting and the election did indicate the direction that most community members want to go," Dunbar said. "While no one wants taxes to increase without reason, many understand that if our community is not growing, not investing in its future, it's going to begin a decline that is very difficult to get out of, and certainly without significant costs in the long run.'

16

22

Dunbar added that he felt the all the people." election results showed that the voters also want people in elected positions who are offering solutions and not simply criticizing others for the state of affairs.

There are a lot of challenges ahead for our Selectboard and the school boards," Dunbar said. Having people on the boards who can work together toward solutions with civility and concern for all those affected, he said, seemed to be important for voters.

"We should not be encouraging voters to make decisions based on fears of what could happen," he said, but instead "based on what we as elected officials will do to provide solutions when and if challenges are faced."

He commented on the amazing sense of pride he sees in the community and noted that the future of Rockingham is looking brighter on many fronts. "I think that voters are sending a signal that they want to capture that energy and ensure it continues in coming years.'

Paul Obuchowski, who served on the Union High School board for 30 years before stepping down 12 years ago, was voted back as a school director of UHS District #27, defeating incumbent Jason Terry with 546 votes to his 149.

Obuchowski was also elected as town moderator with 677 votes, and he was also elected school moderator.

'For me it was time to come back on," said Obuchowski, who was budget chair on the school board for 20 years.

He noted that many in the community had encouraged him to return and said his nearly 300-vote victory margin over the incumbent "inspired me a little bit."

"I want to thank the voters of Rockingham for supporting me in the run for School Board," he said. "I'm always open to have people call me or stop me on the street. I really want to represent

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He added that he felt, during the last budget process, "I'm not sure that those board members really listened to the community," a sentiment he interprets as the reason previous board members were defeated by such a wide margin.

He noted that in all his years on the board, the only time he'd presented a budget that was defeated was when he felt the board had not listened to what the community wanted. That budget had eliminated a driver's ed position, and voters rejected the budget until the position was added back in.

"It's always about the kids and the community," Obuchowski said. "The kids are the most important. Educate every kid at a cost the taxpayers can afford."

In the race for one threeyear seat as director of the Rockingham School District, Rick Holloway defeated incumbent Priscilla Clough Lambert, 460 to 192.

Two new members were elected to one-year seats as school directors of Union High School District #27, Christopher Hodsden, Sr., with 411 votes, and Kim Keefe, with 310. Also run-ning were Michael Stack, with 196 votes: Virginia Driscoll, with 184; Jason Terry, with 134; and Deborah Wright, with 77.

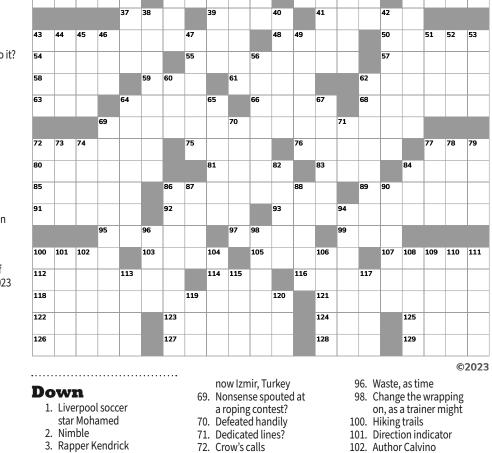
While new to the board, both new members are well known in the school system. Hodsden was principal of BFUHS for 16 years before taking a new position, and Keefe had been a front office worker at the high school.

In other results, Thomas (Tad) Dedrick was elected as a town lister with 550 votes.

Elected as trustees of the Rockingham Free Public Library were Martha Rowley, with 543 votes, and Michael Sola, with 438.

The sole two-year seat on the **Rockingham School District** board was won by unopposed Jim McAulliffe with 499 votes.

Article 2, proposing a \$10.5 million Rockingham school budget, passed 412 to 232.



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#### 1. Shaker crystals Closest pal, for short Celtics broadcaster Maxwell 8. "No bid" 14. 19. Lab culture

Across

- 20. Part of REO
- 21. Skin care brand
- 22. Dunkin' order
- Succotash bit 23.
- 25. Pale shade of ketchup?
- 27. The way OPEC would do it? 29. Not be serious
- 30. Talking-to
- 31. Frequency unit
- 32. Familiar literary device
- Pair for Mikaela Shiffrin 34.
- 36. Tailless primates
- 37. \_\_Maria"
- 39. Wind blast
- 41. Luggage attachment
   43. Yearly record of
- Father Christmas? 48. Mil. branch with an
- academy in New London 50.
- "I love you" in Spanish Suitable for regifting, 54.
- perhaps Like the Writers Guild of 55.
- America, for much of 2023
- 57. Infamous Ford flop
- 58. Teeny 59. Pops
- 61. Geologic divisions
- 62. Accommodated
- No later than, briefly 63.
- 64. Earlier
- Tiny criticisms 66.
- 68. Things that happen
- 69. What a mushroom lover always has?



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"Left Behind"

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- 72. Christmas songs

- 75. Ice sheet
- 76. Moving van company 77. Coxa, anatomically
- speaking
- 80. Negative battery terminals
- 81. Pulmonary organ
- 83. Taylor Swift album
- with "All Too Well"
- 84. Facility
- \_ Talking" (2022 Best 85. Picture nominee)
- Prepare to cold-reboot 86.
- 89. "No argument here"
- 91. Elitist sort
- \_ the King Prawn (Muppet) 92.
- Realistic animal figurine? 93.
- 95. Westernmost mainland
- African city
- 97. Bit of whiskey
- 99. Big Apple daily: Abbr.
- 100. Twosome
- 103. Cold War weapon: Abbr.
- 105. Plant swelling 107. Inflatable boats
- 112. A, for one
- 114. Tolkien tree creature
- 116. Prepare to have soup instead of salad
- at the buffet?
- 118. Ride a pinniped?
- 121. Totally safe
- \_ up (hid for a while) 122. " Fables"
- 123.
- 124. Useful connections
- 125. "A Death in the Family" author James
- 126. Burly and beefy
- 127. Poured or drizzled
- 128. Get on in years
- 129. Hit on the head

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  - 74. NFL broadcaster Tony 77. Challenging 78. "Hmm, OK' 79. Banana throwaway 82. Rot
- 11. Goes over the Globe?
- 12. OB's mistake
- 13. President who was

- 16. Misbehave

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- 18.
- 24. Turkish market
- 26. Annoying one
- 28.
- 33. Throb
- 38.
- the "Velvet Voice"
- 40. Submit

- 45. League whose 2023
- championship was
- won by Gotham FC 46. Many a stocking stuffer
- 47. Fall asleep
- 49. Nun
- 51. Org.
- 52. Fitting
- 53. Part of REO
- 56. Very much
- 60. Archer's asset
- 62. Study for Gregor Mendel
- 64. Cornmeal dish
- 65. Arrive in a car
- 67. Ancient Greek city that's
- Last issue's solution "It Ain't Over Till The Fat Lady Sings" SHOP S A D L E R PEOPLE O U I O U I C A I N E C O A R S E N P O R T S A I D A R E W R O N G W H E N R A S P C I V I C D U P E S A N E W A C E L A ALITO T H E Y S A Y O P E R A I S S L A T E R H A M C R E W E L N O E L C O W A R D S T E A L S O N O U T L E E E G O A H H B I T E M O M L I S A OAR C R Y P T O C E O S R A S S O C A L N O T W H A T I T U S E D T O T P A I N I O N M O N K R O M M E L R A I N G D P C O D A N O W A L A I R K B O O L U N A R M A P R I P B E I T I S W H A T T E E N S Y S Z A E N D A S H I T U S E D T O B E T H A T BYTE O I C A R E P A O T H E R M A C H O ARCS B U M S T E A D I S W H A T S W R O N G Y O U B E T T R I M T A B M O R E S WITHIT ΟΝΥΧ N O P E T S
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- 84. Freudian psyche component 86. Low key? 87. Flavoring plant 88. "Yes, I already know them" 90. Option from South Station 94. Windy, in a way
  - 110. Sixth-grader, typically 111. Aerodynamic 113. Give up 115. Element #10 117. To be, in Latin 119. Vote in favor 120. Acid that's "dropped"
- 102. Author Calvino 104. 2023 Ballon d'Or winner Lionel

Britcom, for short

- 106. Journalist Hinojosa who
- founded Futuro Media Jennifer Saunders 108

109. Do without

## ■ VHIP financing

Brattleboro, to identify suitable tenants exiting homelessness. Applicants who create accessory dwelling units — think "grand-mother apartments" — on an owner-occupied property are exempt from this requirement.

Since 2022, VHIP has funded the creation of more than 500 housing units statewide, many for people experiencing homelessness.

Windham & Windsor Housing Trust (WWHT), which administers the VHIP program for Windham and Windsor counties, has completed more projects than organizations in any other region in the state, according to WWHT Executive Director Elizabeth Bridgewater. Since 2022, WWHT has awarded or approved more than \$3.3 million in VHIP grants for Windham County projects, which will result in 75 new apartments.

The Commons spoke to three housing developers whose local VHIP-funded projects are in various stages of completion. While they all praised the program for its intent to lift Vermonters out of homelessness, they agreed that navigating the grant program, in addition to dealing with the complexities of housing development, is a challenge.

#### 'This would be completely crazy for a first-timer to take on'

A single mom of two, Megan Talbot lives in Chittenden County, where she is a teacher at Colchester Middle School. Calling her investment properties her "golden egg," her goal is to retire from teaching in a year or two and work full-time in real estate development.

Talbot is using VHIP grant funds, along with loans, tax credits, and personal funds, to renovate 33 Oak St. When she bought the building in June 2023, it was "in a full state of disrepair," Talbot said, with drugs reportedly being sold out of one of the apartments. After spending much of the past year evicting tenants, Talbot hopes to break ground on May 1.

Talbot estimates the total project cost at \$1.1 million. Half of the \$510,000 in VHIP grants will be used to rehab eight existing apartments in the house. Additional funds will be used to build five more units in the huilding

"I want to keep the bones of the building because it's quite beautiful, like a lot of places in town," Talbot said.

Talbot said the skills she gained in her first three years of investFROM SECTION FRONT

Talbot believes small-scale, local development is one part of the multifaceted approach to creating the housing that is needed in the state.

"My opinion — probably because I'm a developer — is to maximize use of the existing infrastructure before breaking ground on new builds. We have a ton of old, aging housing stock. If I had enough help with funding I could turn some of the big old properties in town into smaller, affordable places to live. Nobody needs a 7,000 square foot house anymore."

#### 'I'm learning on the fly here'

Chris Brown, owner of Cozy VT Properties in Wilmington, is using a \$250,000 VHIP grant to create five apartments in a renovated paint store downtown. The building will also house a small retail space and a commercial space for his business.

Noting the paperwork involved in the project — four stacks of paper on his office floor — Brown said, "I sure as hell hope it's worth it.'

But Brown said he couldn't have done the project without the VHIP grant.

The total project cost is esti-mated to be \$600,000, excluding the purchase of the property. State tax credits are being used to restore the historic facade of the building, install new windows, and bring the building's electrical and plumbing systems up to code.

Brown's rents are in line with HUD's fair market prices. He charges \$1,076 for his studio apartments, \$1,200 for the one-bedroom, and \$1,700 for the three-bedroom, including utilities.

'Finding applicants who best fit the project is the biggest hurdle," Brown said. "Just because there's a bunch of people that need housing doesn't mean they're a good fit.

Brown worked closely with Groundworks staff to identify his first two tenants, who are local to Wilmington.

"A lot of these folks who are coming through Coordinated Entry and in need of a home may or may not have a job, may or may not have the means to pay for rent," Brown said. "As generous as I like to be, ultimately the building costs money to operate."

Brown was able to secure project-based Section 8 housing vouchers, which cover most of the rental costs; tenants' payments are capped at 30 percent of their income.

Brown said that it wasn't his intent to build housing for peo-



This apartment house at 33 Oak St. in Brattleboro is in the process of being renovated with funds through the Vermont Housing Improvement Program. When finished, there will be a total of 13 new units available for rent.

## This blueprint prepared by Greenberg Associates Architects of Putney shows what the apartment house at 33 Oak St. in Brattleboro will look like after completion of a renovation project.

as a way to create much-needed senior housing. "I said to myself, 'I have a big old house, I have plenty of bedrooms for myself and I don't need to use the shed," she said. "I can't help everybody, but I can make a small apartment for somebody.'

Her tenant, an 85-year-old woman who had been evicted from the state's motel housing program, moved into the small apartment in September. A Section 8 voucher pays for the majority of the rent and the tenant pays the remainder.

working with contractors. She believes the VHIP process could be improved with a guide "in plain, simple English, not contract language" outlining the steps.

"I'm glad that I did it," Erenhouse says of her project. "It provided a really quiet, safe, clean place for an older person to be housed in an affordable manner."

#### **Strong Demand** for VHIP 2.0

The latest iteration of the pro-Erenhouse is a lawyer with gram — VHIP 2.0 — introduces

inspection, and identifying and are hard to access in more rural towns due to the lack of transportation options.

Between VHIP's five- and ten-year options, housing can be created both for those in need of intensive services and for those who don't need these services. Either way, says Bridgewater, private property owners can help to address the structural crisis of

not enough units, which results in a virtual musical chairs situation where the most vulnerable are left standing with no housing options.

ELLEN PRATT/THE COMMONS

WWHT will start accepting applications for VHIP 2.0 funding on April 15. The organization reports strong demand for grants, with 169 people inquiring about the next round of funding.





ing in real estate prepped her to tackle the Oak Street project, which is the largest "gut renovation" she's done.

"I don't know that I would have been able to navigate all the checks and balances along the way that it's taken to get to this point, if I didn't have the professional drive to do this, if I was just Megan Talbot, mom, trying to do my own property," she said.

She believes the VHIP program could be improved if the state funded a consultant to assist program participants who aren't experienced in real estate development.

"I definitely would say that it would be completely crazy for a first-timer to take on," Talbot said

Talbot had what she calls a "traditional money upbringing": raised to go to college, get a good job, and work really hard to save money until retirement. But she saw a different future for herself, one that could pair her interest in social justice with a stable income.

"Part of my vision for investing, besides making money," Talbot said, "is to provide clean, safe, affordable housing for people because the cost of living in Vermont is outrageous right now.

Talbot found the Oak Street property by networking with local real estate investors. Since she doesn't live locally, she hired Bob Lyons of Southern Vermont Property Management to manage the property.

Talbot will work with Groundworks Collaborative to choose tenants from a list of people experiencing homelessness. "It's going to be a learning experience for me," Talbot said, "but anytime we can provide opportunity for folks who need it, it's just going to build a stronger community.

When it comes to choosing tenants, Talbot said, "I'm less concerned about things like credit scores, and more concerned about finding somebody who is going to take care of the property, has stable work, or the ability to provide some income to pay for it."

"Just a good, honest, hardworking person who needs a place to live," she added. "I'm looking for quality of character almost more than what's in their bank account."

ple experiencing homelessness. "I needed a building to run my business out of," he said.

through this project, we were kind of like, 'This is good. This is gonna help people. This is good all the way around."

Brown is a general contractor who also operates short-term rentals and a commercial property. Originally from Dover, he attended Wilmington High School and spent 20 years as a painter and contractor.

While Brown advises those interested in the VHIP program to "do their research early," he acknowledges that the only real way to get a good understanding of the program is to go through it. "I'm learning on the fly here," he said.

He's hopeful that in another month or two, once all of his units are occupied, things will smooth out.

"And then I might say, 'Wow! That was a lot of work but worth it. I was able to fill a void in the community by taking an old, rundown building and creating two retail spaces and providing housing to five folks who needed it.""

#### 'I can make a small apartment

**for somebody'** With a \$50,000 VHIP grant and a home equity line of credit, Joann Erenhouse was able to create a one-bedroom apartment in the shed attached to the back of her 223-year-old Chester house.

Erenhouse is the community relations director for Senior Solutions, a nonprofit that provides services and support to senior citizens in southeast Vermont. Through her work, she saw that many older Vermonters were being displaced from their housing during the pandemic when the houses and apartments they were living in were bought by out-of-towners who didn't want tenants.

Many of these older people ended up in the state's emergency motel program.

"My concern was: if you're 85 years old, and you're put on a five-year waiting list for an apartment, what are the chances that you're going to end up in a casket before you get an apartment?" Erenhouse said.

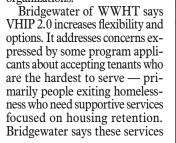
Erenhouse saw the VHIP grant

some experience in commercial a 10-year forgivable loan alongdevelopment. She says she's not afraid of construction and has "But as my wife and I went renovated houses in the past, so she understands the process. These skills served her well as the project progressed.

"You really have to be a good project manager," she said. "Many people living in old houses can barely figure out their own buildings — utilities and everything — let alone handle a construction project."

Housing development involves many steps, including securing a building permit, getting a fire

side the existing 5-year grants. This new option requires landlords to rent units at HUD's fair market rates without the need for referrals from coordinated entry organizations.



Jamaica Selectboard Mtg. 4/8/24: Wed 8:30p, Thurs 6a, Fri 2:30p

Townshend Selectboard Mtg. 4/9/24: Thurs 6p, Fri 8a, Sat 12p

Windham Southeast School District Board Mtg. 4/9/24: Thurs 8:30p, Fri 5:30a, Sat 2:30p

Guilford Selectboard Mtg. 4/10/24: Fri 6p, Sat 8:30a, Sun 12p

Windham Southeast Supervisory Union Board Mtg. 4/10/24: Fri 8:30p, Sat 6a, Sun 2:30p

Brattleboro Representative Town Meeting 2024: Mon 11:45a, Tues 6p, Wed 6a

Newfane Selectboard Mtg. 4/1/24: Mon 6:15p, Fri 5p, Sat 11a

Brattleboro Planning Commission Mtg. 4/1/24: Tues 10a

River Valleys Unified School District Board Mtg. 4/1/24: Thurs

4:30p

Perspectives on Trauma - Part 2: Alice Buchanan: Mon 2:30p, Tues 9a, Wed 11a, Thurs 4:30p, Fri 9:30p, Sat 5:30p, Sun 9:30a

Windham World Affairs Council – Migration from the North Triangle: They Are Here Because We Were There: Wed 4:30p, Thurs 9a, Fri 12:30p, Sat 8p, Sun 12:30p

Town of Brattleboro - Meet The

BPD: Officer Deanna Lopez: Mon 6:55p, Wed 6:55p, Fri 1:55p & 6:55p Sun 5:55p

Channel 1078 News - Sam's Outdoor Outfitters Closing Tour 1/29/24: Mon 2p, Tues 6a, Wed 11:30a & 9:15p, Thurs 4p, Fri 5:30p, Sat 9a, Sun 6p

Juno Orchestra - Challenge -Movement 3 from Climpses of Azure: Tues 11:45a & 3:45, Wed 5:45p, Thurs 10:20a, Fri 10:50a, Sat 12:20p & 9:20p, Sun 1:50p

Sunflower Court - @Sunflower's Ct! Promo: Mon 6:30p, Wed 9:10p, Thurs 6:55p, Fri 10:10a, Sun 7:55a

BCTV Open Studio - Moover Microtransit Program 3/27/24: Tues 8p, Wed 3:30p, Thurs 5:30p, Fri 7:30a, Sat 6:30p, Sun 10:30a

Energy Week with George Harvey & Tom Finnell: Mon 9a, Tues 5p, Thurs 11a, Sat 7p

Vermontitude - Weekly Episode: Tue 11:30a & 6:30p, Wed 6a, Thu 1p, Sat 12p, Sun 5p Vernon Selectboard Mtg. 4/2/24: Tues 11:30a

News Block: Reformer News Break: Mon-Fri Brattleboro Selectboard Mtg. 4/2/24: Tues 6a, Sat 8p BUHS-TV News: Mon-Fri 12:15p & St. Michael's Episcopal Church -Weekly Service: Wed 2p, Sat 7:30a, Sun 11a Dummerston Selectboard Mtg. 4/3/24: Tues 3:30p

Putney Selectboard Mtg. 4/3/24: Wed 2:15p Trinity Lutheran Church - Weekly Service: Wed 10a, Thurs 7a, Sun 3p

Guilford Community Church -Weekly Service: Wed 6:30a, Fri 8p, Sun 8a St. Michael's Catholic Church Mass: Tue 6:45a & 2p, Thurs 8p, Sat 4p (LIVE)

Town Matters - Weekly Episode: Mon 6p, Wed 4:45p, Thurs 11a, Fri 11:30a, Sat 5p

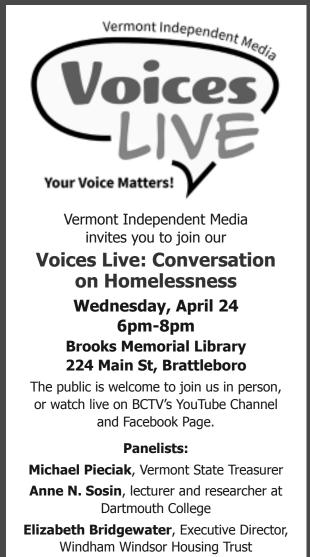
The David Pakman Show: Mon 8a, Tue 9a, Wed 5p, Fri 10:30a, Sun 5p

#### Note: Schedule subject to change.

View full schedule and watch online at brattleboroTV.org

BCTV's Program Highlights are sponsored by The Commons. BCTV's municipal meeting coverage helps Commons reporters stay in touch. Read about it in the Town & Village section at www.commonsnews.org.

**Brattleboro Community Television – 257-0888** 



Josh Davis, Executive Director, SEVCA

Libby Bennett, Executive Director, Groundworks Collaborative.

Moderated by Joyce Marcel

#### MILESTONES

Births, deaths, and news of people from Windham County

#### **Obituaries**

• Margaret M. "Greta" Burke, 66, of Taos, New Mexico. Died March 30, 2024, after a brave fight with cancer. Greta was the beloved sister of State Rep. Mollie S. Burke and the stepsister of Anne Cloutier Montgomery of Guilford. The seventh child in a large brood of 11, Greta was born in Buffalo, New York on Feb. 18, 1958. She grew up surrounded by her many siblings and numerous extended family and friends in Buffalo, and at the family summer house on the Niagara River in Canada. It was an atmosphere of hospitality, laughter, and conviviality that Greta embodied throughout her life. She graduated from the Nichols School in Buffalo and pursued artistic talents at Concordia University in Montreal and SUNY-Potsdam. But friends and a sense of adventure took her first to Vail, Colorado, and later to Taos. In Vail, she applied her artistic expertise to the clothing shop she managed, while earning a reputation as one of the top skiers in the valley. In Taos, she met her husband Mike Levison, who survives her. Greta and Mike excelled in extreme sports. They skied all over the West, hiked in to the backcountry, and were helicoptered on to glaciers. In warmer weather, they took their mountain bikes over the Taos terrain and drove a camper out to remote sites to bike up and down mountains. Greta was part of a women's biking group in Taos. She especially enjoyed teaching mountain biking to youth as a volunteer for the Field Institute of Taos, a nonprofit that promotes outdoor experiences and healthy lifestyles. Greta was a warm and compassionate person, and a fun-loving afficionado of creative word play. She exuded style, whether in ski gear, biking gear, or dressed up for a party. She was predeceased by her parents, F. Brendan Burke and Molly Scully Burke Cloutier, her stepfather Dr. Louis Carl Cloutier, and stepsister Sally Stallard (Artie) of Ferndale, Florida. In addition to her husband, she is survived by five sisters: Mollie Burke (Peter Gould) of Brattleboro, Sara Burke Potter (Grove) of Buffalo, Madeline Burke-Vigeland (Nils), of Yonkers, New York, Deirdre Goodrich (Michael) of Norwich, and Mary Alyssa Burke Fagherazzi (Sergio) of Boston; five brothers, F. Brendan Burke Jr. (Mary Ellen) of Buffalo, Christopher Burke (Amy Rowland) of Buffalo, John Burke (Catherine) of San Francisco, Edward Burke (Julie) of Brooklyn, New York, and T. Patrick Burke (Carrie) of Rye, New York. She is also survived by four stepsiblings: Anne Cloutier Montgomery (Warren) of Guilford, Mary Jo O'Connell of Doolin, County Clare, Ireland, Michael Cloutier of Arizona, and Clare Cloutier of Seattle, Washington, along with numerous nieces, nephew, cousins, and extended family members. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: In Greta's memory, donations can be made to The Field Institute of Taos (fitaos.org).



Jo was born in Fitchburg, Massachusetts in 1929. Her parents, Anne and Richard Campbell, raised Jo and her older brothers Richard Jr. and John in their happy home in Fitchburg. During World War II, Jo's father re-enlisted in the Army, so Jo attended boarding school and graduated from Abbot Academy, now Phillips Academy. After high school, Jo attended one year of college at Bouve College, now part of Northeastern University in Boston, majoring in physical education. On New Years Eve in 1947, Jo was reacquainted with Weyman "Stumpy" Crocker at her parents' farm, Sidelands Sugarbush, in Westminster West. As children, they had played together in Fitchburg, and often Stumpy and her brothers shooed her away, as they thought she was too young to play with the big boys. Jo and Stumpy were engaged six months after the New Year's Eve party and married in Fitchburg in July 1948. Between 1950 and 1959, five children were born. The family moved several times to support Stumpy's career, first as a math teacher and then as an engineer. They eventually moved to Springfield, Vermont, in 1967, where they lived for the next 15 years. Jo lived off and on at the farm in Westminster West since she was 12 years old. During the summers, she brought all five children where they camped, first in a tent and then in a cabin, on the hill. Camping out at the farm was something enjoyed by the whole family. Jo's life focused on her family, but over the years she worked as a bookkeeper and a farmer. In 1979, Jo and Stumpy moved from Springfield to the farm in Westminster West to care for her parents. Jo lived there for the rest of her life. Her co-leadership of the farm helped to move it from a tiny bucket operation to a full-fledged producer of the most maple syrup per tap in southern Vermont. Jo loved animals and over the years gave loving care to a line of dogs, cats, horses, goats, ducks, and chickens. Her first dog was an English Setter named Benny, and she is survived by her much-adored cat, Quinny. Jo was passionate about crafts and homemaking. She was an excellent bookkeeper. She could sew, knit, cane chairs, paint, garden, and cook. She loved hiking, swimming, canoeing, and skiing and passed on the love of those sports to all five of her children. She was active until the very last days of her life, walking as far as she could to keep strong and healthy. All her life, Jo was active in her local churches. Since 1979, she was a member of the Congregational Church in Westminster West where she sometimes attended services since she was 12 years old. Survivors include her children: Joanna "Jan" Crocker, Sheila Patinkin, Richard Crocker, Daniel Crocker, and Nathalie "Lee" (David Mulholland) Crocker. She is also survived by 11 grandchildren and nine great grandchildren. Jo was the last survivor of her generation — the "Greatest

by her parents, brothers, husband, and son-in law Hugh Patinkin. Jo was amazing, loving, fierce, feisty, rugged, beautiful, and wise. She will be missed, and her family is grateful for a life well-lived. MEMORIAL INFORMA-TION: A memorial service will be held at the Congregational Church of Westminster West, on June 21, at 3 p.m. Her ashes will be interred at the Westminster West Cemetery immediately before the memorial service. Donations to the Congregational Church of Westminster West or the Westminster Volunteer Fire Department.

• Elaine M. Hoose, 87, of Bellows Falls. Died on March 31, 2024, at her home. She was born on March 18, 1937 in Wilmington to Merritt and Flora (Sage) Sumner. She earned an associate's degree and worked at Putney Paper and Ames Department Store in the Electronic Department as a cashier. Elaine's love and joy was her family, especially her grandchildren. Elaine is survived by her daughters Joan Hoose (Dwight Hanson), Debora Butler (Don Butler), and Stella Hoose. She is also survived by her grandchildren Carolynne, Heather, Holly, Ricky, Bridget, Amanda, Lars, Tiffany, and Thomas; as well as 19 great-grandchildren and 13 great-great-grandchildren, and her sisters Patricia Gouin and Margret Carrier. Elaine was predeceased by her parents, her husband, Richard, grandchild Lucas Dion, and her sister Betty LeClair. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: A memorial service was held on April 6 at Fenton & Hennessey Funeral Home in Bellows Falls. Burial will take place in Westminster at a later

date. Kathryn Leslie "Kathy" Knapp, 79, died peacefully on March 31, 2024, after

battling a long illness. Born April 29, 1944, in Brattleboro, Kathryn was the daughter of the late Floyd and Maxine (Magoon) Smith of Vernon. On April 28, 1963, Kathryn married her husband Richard, and they enjoyed 54 years of marriage prior to his death in 2017. Throughout her career, Kathryn consistently demonstrated a willingness to lend a hand with a warm smile across various roles at Mammoth Mart, King's, Ames, and Walgreens. During her free time, Kathryn found joy in traveling and cherishing moments with her loved ones. She was most happy when she was hosting holidays (complete with



Left to right: Windham Regional Career Center students Ori—n Knowlton, Blaize Weiss, Quin Forchion, and T Contakos at the Culinary Institute of America moments before starting the competition.

#### WRCC students win second place in **Culinary Institute of America contest**

BRATTLEBORO-Windham Regional Career Center Culinary II students Quin Forchion, T Contakos, Orion Knowlton, and Blaize Weiss won second place in a New York State Restaurant Association Regional Competition at the Culinary

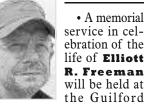
Hyde Park, New York, over and shallot-sauteed asparagus) the weekend of March 23–24. and dessert (poached pears with The students competed against five other Vermont teams preparing a three-course modern Italian meal consisting of antipasti (caprese salad, grilled zucchini, and pickled carrots), main meal (salmon Institute of America (CIA) in piccata with creamy polenta

and dessert (poached pears with mango and pistachio cream) on two single burners in 60 minutes.

Their restaurant, La Dolce Cipolla (The Sweet Onion), was honored with a trophy.

Long Island suburbs. His father, number of the most important exhibitions in the late-20th century Bernard, owned and operated a number of cemeteries in the New and his works are part of public collections in the United States York area. His mother, Mildred and abroad. Michael founded his (Gimbel) Singer, was a homecollaborative studio in Wilmington maker. He is survived by his sister, more than 30 years ago to advance Louise Stolitzky. Michael received a bachelor's degree in fine arts increasingly complex designs that sculpt spaces and regenerate from Cornell University in 1967. He lived in Wilmington most of landscapes. His academic work his life and much of his work was included teaching graduate level created there. In 1996, Vermont architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the Gov. Howard Dean honored Graduate Program of the School Michael with the Vermont Award for Excellence in the Arts. Michael of Visual Arts, New York City; created site-specific sculptures The Koopman Visiting Chair of Art at Hartford College of for over 45 years and had several one-person shows, most notably Art; and The Innovation Studio at the Rhode Island School of at the Guggenheim Museum in New York City and most recently Design. He was a co-founder of at the Utzon Center in Aalborg the Center for Creative Solutions and the Danish Architectural at the Marlboro College Graduate Center in Copenhagen, Denmark. Center. He spent his winters in Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, Florida, where he also kept a stu-Michael's work opened new posdio. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: sibilities for outdoor and indoor None provided. For more inforsculpture and contributed to the mation, contact Jason Bregman at jbregman@michaelsinger.com. definition of site specific art and the reimagining of public places. From the 1990s to the present,

#### Services



and co-authored Infrastructure Community Church in Guilford on Friday, April 19 at 2 p.m. Mr.

## **BAJC** hosts community Passover Seder

WEST BRATTLEBORO-The Brattleboro Area Jewish Community invites everyone to join them on Tuesday, April 23, from 6 to 9 p.m. at West Village Meeting House, 29 South St., for their community Passover Seder.

Rabbi Amita Jarmon will colead this seder with community members. As always, there will be questions for contemplation and discussion and plenty of singing. Dinner will be catered by Chef Gretchen Hardy from The Porch. Wine, grape juice, matzah, matzo balls, chicken soup, gefilte fish, eggs, and other traditional Passover items will be supplied by BAJC.

For online registration, reservation, payment, and entree selection, contact stephan@ bajcvermont.org or 802-257-1959. Register and pay by Sunday, April 14. If paying by check, make payable to BAJC and mail to P.O. Box 2353, West Brattleboro, VT 05303.

There are beef, chicken, fish, vegetarian, and vegan entrees.

• Joanna Campbell "Jo" Crocker, 95, of Westminster West. Died March 21, 2024 at Grace Cottage Hospital in Townshend. She was fondly

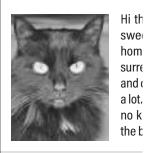
Milestones are published as community news at no cost to families, thanks to financial support of our members and advertisers. Send them to news@ commonsnews.org. Though we ask that content for this column be sent by Friday at 5 p.m., we will do our best to include late obituaries. Please alert the newsroom at 802-246-6397 for post-deadline urgent submissions. We will always do our best to accommodate contributors in their time of grief.



Brattleboro, VT



WILL YOL



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burnt pies), dancing at the VFW, enjoying casino visits, savoring Coca-Cola, watching cheesy Hallmark movies, pursuing her hobbies of collecting monkeys and thimbles, or eating Chinese food. Above all, she held a deep affection for family adventures and the role of being a grandmother. She is survived by her children: David Knapp of Vernon, Floyd and Penny Knapp of Alburgh, Kevin Knapp of Brattleboro, and Heidi and Sam Clement of Vernon; two grandsons, Christopher Higgins-Johnson and his wife Casey of Charleston, South Carolina, and Tyler Clement of Salt Lake City, Utah, as well as several nieces, nephews, and cousins. In addition Generation." She was predeceased to her parents, and beloved husband, Kathryn was predeceased by her brothers Albert and Kermit Smith, her sister Mary Sawin, and her daughter-in-law Rhonda

Knapp. MEMORIAL INFORMA-TION: A celebration of Kathryn's life will be held on Saturday, April 13, from noon to 3 p.m., at the First United Methodist Church, 18 Town Crier Dr., in Brattleboro. All are welcome to attend. Graveside services will take place at Evergreen Cemetery in Winchester, New Hampshire, at the convenience of the family. In lieu of flowers, donations in Kathryn's name may be made

to the American Cancer Society. Michael Lewis Singer, 78, of Wilmington. Died on March 13, 2024 in Delray Beach, Florida. A trailblazer within the regenerative design community, Michael was born on Nov. 12, 1945, in New York City, and grew up in the 2019, he was honored for his work at his home on March 12, 2024. by the American Academy of Arts and Letters. He participated in a fer condolences to his family, visit

his work has been instrumental

in transforming public art, archi-

tecture, landscape, and planning

projects into successful models

for urban and ecological regener-

ation. He has also been engaged

in the rethinking of infrastruc-

ture facilities and systems in

the United States and Europe

and Community, published by

Environmental Defense Fund. In Elliott, 80, of Dummerston, died To view his full obituary and ofatamaniuk.com

## Windham County **Retired Educators** plan spring meetings

Windham County Retired Educators will begin its series of spring meetings at 11:30 a.m. on Wednesday, April 10, at Holton Hall on the Winston Prouty Center campus.

Following a brief business meeting, those in attendance will hear from a representative of the Vermont State Teachers' Retirement System regarding the work of the state on behalf of retirees in the system. Attendees are free to bring a lunch or reserve one. Beverages and dessert will be provided.

Membership in the association is open to anyone who worked in a public, private, pre-school, or post-secondary education role.

The Windham County Retired Educators Association is an affiliate of the Vermont Retired Educators Association and supports its activities which include lobbying to promote legislation benefiting all older Vermonters.

One of the critical activities

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BRATTLEBORO — of the association is the support of annual scholarships. The Beryl Gardner Scholarships are awards to students completing their high school education at Community High School of Vermont. CHSV is operated by the Vermont Department of Corrections for adult inmates who wish to complete high school or take an equivalency exam. These competitive awards are issued to those con-

tinuing their education. Members of the Association will meet Tuesday, May 14, for a presentation on fraud awareness, and again on Tuesday, June 11, to hear about Medicare and Medicare Advantage programs.

Those who are retired from a position in an educational setting or will be retiring at the end of the current academic year are invited to become members. If interested, contact Joanne Corey at joannecorey@ gmail.com or Elliott Greenblott at egreenblott@comcast.net.

> CPDT-KA, KPA-CTP, IAABC-CDBC Fear Free Certified

All sides dishes are veggie/vegan. The full menu is on the registration form. Cost per adult is \$25, \$18 for Children 10 and older, and \$10 for children 9 and under. Families of three or more pay \$50. No one will be turned away for lack of funds.

#### AAUW offers scholarships to local students

BRATTLEBORO — The Brattleboro Branch of the American Association of University Women (AAUW) is continuing 72 years of academic financial assistance for women and girls by again offering scholarships of up to \$1,000 each to qualified candidates who live in Windham County.

Both graduating high school seniors from area high schools, preparatory schools, or home schools and women who are considered college ready by federal financial aid guidelines are eligible to apply. Applications will be judged on academic performance, community involvement, and financial need.

The applicant must be accepted or enrolled as an undergraduate student in a one-year certificate or two- or four-year accredited college degree program for 2024–25. Applicants must have been legal residents of Windham County for a minimum of two years.

Guidance counselors in area high schools have posters and application forms. Information can also be obtained from area college financial aid offices or by contacting the AAUW scholarship committee at grussgot@sover.net.

Applications must be postmarked by Monday, May 6, and can be sent to AAUW Scholarship Committee, in care of CCV, Attn.: Melanie Crosby, 41 Harmony Place, Brattleboro, VT 05301. Now in its 97th year, the

Brattleboro branch is part of a national organization that has advanced equity for women and girls through advocacy, education, philanthropy, and research since its founding in 1881.





Ari Ress, of Brattleboro, captured the total eclipse from Plainfield.

Four children — Jacob, Alice, Grace, and Sage — watch the eclipse from Dummerston.

# PATH of TOTALITY

Vermonters pause for rare celestial synchronicity — a front-row seat to a solar eclipse on April 8





MICHELLE BOS-LUN/SPECIAL TO THE COMMONS

Ron Bos-Lun of Westminster watches as the light returns. Bos-Lun joined hundreds of people in Montpelier on the lawn of the Vermont State House (including his wife, Rep. Michelle Bos-Lun).

"My dearest friend's father is buried on a hilltop in Glover, and so we spent the day playing hooky and basking in the light," writes Zara Bode. "It's true what they say: there's nothing like it. Road tripping to totality was worth every second of slog up and down 91."

HERE IS something really cool and uniting about being out and about and having everyone wearing silly paper glasses and staring at the sky. Suddenly, we're all doing the same thing for the same reason ... and then everyone goes back to their day.

-Allyson Wendt, Brattleboro

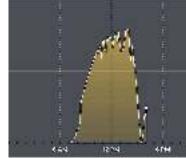


Rex enjoyed the eclipse from Guilford.

A family watches with wonder from Brattleboro.



"I thought it was cool to see the drop in our solar power as the eclipse began," says Bill Lindsay of West Brattleboro.



BILL LINDSAY/SPECIAL TO THE COMMONS

At Elliot Street Park in Brattleboro, "There was a good-sized crowd of families and a lot of snacks, included several eclipse cakes!" writes parent Kate Audlin. "We set up a shadow projector. We had a great time."

KATE AUDLIN/SPECIAL TO THE COMMONS



GEORGE CARVILL, SPECIAL TO THE COMMONS George Carvill of Brattleboro returned from

northern Vermont amid the throngs, who put a strain on goods and services, including restaurants, including one in St. Johnsbury that "persevered until they ran out of food and posted the sign you can see here." He says he learned another lesson: "In a mass traffic mess, if Google says a different route will save you time and a whole bunch of you in the traffic jam take the Google suggestion, it turns out to cost you more time than it was supposed to save."



MYLES DANAHER/SPECIAL TO THE COMMONS

Out-of-state visitors — estimates ranged from 160,000 to 200,000 of them — came to Vermont to see the eclipse, and a good number of them decided to turn around and go home en masse after it ended. "Never in my lifetime," Myles Danaher of Brattleboro posted on Facebook during his return trip from northern Vermont. "I-91 south the length of Vermont [was] bumper to bumper. Typical 2.5 hour drive was six hours."

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## AROUND THE TOWNS

#### **Town requires Excavation and Trench** Permit before digging

BRATTLEBORO Beginning this construction season, anyone performing excavation work in the town of Brattleboro right-of-way or on systems involving town infrastructure must have an Excavation and Trench Permit.

The permit will allow the Public Works Department to have greater communication with homeowners and contractors about town infrastructure and important steps for a safe workplace prior to beginning excavation. It will also ensure that at the end of the project that the ground surface covers (pavement, concrete, plantings) are left in proper condition.

The permit is free of charge and applications can be found at tinyurl.com/bder7bk8, on the Public Works website, at the Brattleboro Planning Office, and at Public Works. For further information, contact Public Works at 802-254-4255.

#### Coin, postcard, and sports card show on April 13

BRATTLEBORO — The Tri-Town Coin, Postcard and Sports Card Collector's Club will host a couple of guest dealers from New

during its show and collector and refreshments will be served. meetings on Saturday, April 13, at the Holiday Inn Express on Chickering Drive. Area collectors of all ages are invited.

The event, which will offer door prizes, begins at 8 a.m. with a club business meeting during the show's startup session. After a family fun day of buying and selling collectibles, dealers will join the Tri Town Numismatic Society at 2:30 p.m. for its monthly meeting.

There is no admission charge and anyone looking to sell or trade their collectible items may set up a card table by contacting show chairman Joe Fuller at 802-379-2353, or Pepsijoseph@yahoo.com.

#### **Vernon Historians** host program about Vern-Mont Farm

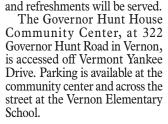
VERNON — The Vernon Historians invite the public to a program at the Governor Hunt House Community Center about Vern-Mont Farm, which has been owned and operated by the Dunklee family for five generations.

On Sunday, April 14, at 2:30 p.m., Jeff Dunklee will share stories, photographs, and the history of this dairy farm and celebrate the contributions to the town by his and other farm families. The program will immediately follow a brief business meeting of the Vernon Historians membership at Hampshire and Massachusetts 2 p.m. It is free, all are welcome,

> Compassion is to see the suffering of others and take action to stop it.

> > What do you feel as you take in this image?

This is an artistic rendering of a photo from a farm of a real piglet. Are you called to take action for this piglet and others like them?



#### Mending bee at **Putney Library**

PUTNEY — The Mending Bee at Putney Public Library, 55 Main St., is back for April. Those with a pile of nice wool socks with holes, favorite jeans that would be perfect if not for a rip in the knee, or sweaters with moth holes, are invited to bring their ailing fabric items to the library on Sunday, April 14, from 1 to 4 p.m., to work on them in the company of others.

Advice and support are always available, but all participants do their own mending. Sewing machines and darning tools are available to use during the Bee. This program is free.

#### 'War Tax' resisters hold information event

BRATTLEBORO — The U.S. military budget for one year exceeds the combined yearly military budgets of the next 11 largest-spending nations. According to Taxes for Peace, New England, "this is paid for by our federal income tax.'

To share what can be done about paying (or not paying) for war, this advocacy group will host its annual war tax resistance information table Monday, April 15 (Tax Day), from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. outside the Brattleboro Food Co-op, 2 Main St. For more information, visit bit.ly/760tax or contact Daniel Sicken at 802-428-3690.

#### **Community shredding** event in Newfane

NEWFANE — On Saturday, April 20, from 9 a.m. to noon, people can securely dispose of their old documents and support the Townshend and Newfane libraries.

A SecurShred truck will be parked on Jail Street in Newfane for this on-site shredding event. There is no need to remove staples or paper clips, and items are shredded as participants wait. The Windham Solid Waste Management District will also be there to discuss composting and have a truck to take computer peripherals for recycling. A \$10 per box donation is sug-

gested, with proceeds split between the Moore Free Library and the Townshend Public Library.

#### Free produce distribution in Putney

PUTNEY — The Vermont Foodbank and the Putney Foodshelf co-sponsor a monthly food drop of free produce and some nonperishables on the fourth Thursday of every month, from 9 to 9:45 a.m., on Alice Holway drive (in front of Putney Meadows, the white building across from the Putney Co-op and the Putney Fire Station).

All are welcome. This is a drive-up service; bags provided. The next monthly food drop is Thursday, April 25, 9 to 9:45 a.m.

#### **Crop Cash benefits** at farmers markets will restart in May

RICHMOND — With the summer farmers market season starting soon, the Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont (NOFA-VT) is once again helping Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) customers to multiply their benefits with Crop Cash, beginning in May. What is Crop Cash? For ev-

ery dollar of 3SquaresVermont/ SNAP benefits spent at a participating farmers market, eligible participants can receive a dollar of Crop Cash (up to \$10) to spend on fruits, vegetables, herbs, culinary seeds, and plant starts. Anyone who receives 3SquaresVT/SNAP benefits, as well as folks who still have P-EBT benefits, is automatically eligible to get Crop Cash at a farmers market — there is no additional application for this program.

Last year, NOFA-VT piloted an expansion called Crop Cash Plus, which allowed SNAP customers to get extra coupons to spend on any SNAP-eligible food (like bread, eggs, meat, dairy, and grains).

According to NOFA-VT, this program was incredibly popular and well-utilized in 2023, but no funding was provided to continue the program in 2024, and they are currently lobbying state lawmakers for a budget allocation to continue Crop Cash Plus later in 2024 or 2025

For more information about the Crop Cash program, visit bit. ly/760-cropcash.

# Art provided by Philip McCulloch-Downs

This ad by Compassionate Brattleboro is funded by The Pollination Project. Compassionate Brattleboro's mission is to raise awareness about the meaning of compassion in our lives. Visit compassionatebrattleboro.org

## **BMH Orthopaedics & Sports Medicine**

the death, the \$3.3 million facility is open, but the separate 30-

bed Morningside House remains

closed as new leadership works on

port we can, but we've learned we

cannot be all things to all people,'

said Bennett, who was recently

promoted to the post of executive

director. "The needs have grown

knows, mirrors that of similar

Groundworks' challenge, she

Back in 2011, when Bennett

was a graduate student, her vol-

unteer work at Brattleboro's former shelter in the First Baptist

Church centered on helping peo-

ple who slept on the floor there.

At the time, the biggest struggle

was the fact the religious congre-

gation was shrinking to the point

it had to sell the building in 2019.

Much has changed since

Bennett joined the agency in

2012. She helped with a merger

that placed all of the area's food

and housing programs under the

Groundworks umbrella in 2015 and celebrated the opening of

its \$3.3 million facility with 34 overnight beds and daytime re-

strooms, showers, washers, dry-

ers and storage lockers in 2021.

people were reported to be without housing in the Brattleboro area, according to a 2019 count.

After the arrival of the pandemic,

that number tripled to 329 in the

ple who struggled with alcohol,"

Bennett said. "Now, we have a lot

of people who struggle with other

Groundworks has also encoun-

tered more clients with mental

health issues. The state is hospi-

talizing the resident charged with

last year's Morningside House

killing until at least August after

ruling the accused to be incom-

petent to stand trial, according to

of its services while the agency's 45 employees grieved and

Following last year's death, Groundworks enlisted other providers to temporarily oversee all

substance use disorders.

"Once, we had a lot of peo-

most recent tally.

court records.

Just before Covid, some 98

**More need** 

than ever

We want to be the best sup-

a blueprint for the future.

a lot more complex."

organizations statewide.

## Where is this piglet and how did they get there?

Scan to learn more!



We offer a wide range of surgical and non-surgical orthopaedic treatments using state-of-the art technology:

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## Groundworks FROM SECTION FRONT

regrouped. On the first anniversary of

'We have learned how to ask for help," Bennett said. "We don't have the capacity to do it all.

Upon returning to operation, the agency then strengthened its rules against threatening behavior.

"We need to consider our own boundaries around increasing safety and reducing risks," Bennett said. "We all understand we're upholding these out of respect for each other."

#### 'There are not enough places for people'

Groundworks is facing other issues, starting with inflation. Its food shelf rescues an estimated \$500,000 of expiring supermarket staples every year. But demand has skyrocketed by up to 100 new households a month, its records show.

The lack of affordable housing is an even larger problem. A recent municipally sponsored Housing Action Plan found an immediate need for more than 500 units in town.

"The perfect metaphor for this is a game of musical chairs, Bennett said. "There are not enough places for people.'

Groundworks is talking with neighbors about its hopes to raze and replace Morningside House, although the agency has yet to announce specific plans.

"We're waiting on some major funding decisions," Bennett said, "but are meticulously designing a brand-new program to bring back beds and services.

The executive director was one of 150 people who attended a recent Brattleboro screening of Vermont filmmaker Bess O'Brien's new documentary Just Getting By.

Bennett nodded knowingly during its depiction of social workers fighting poverty on the frontlines — all while the state and federal government cuts pandemic-era funding.





ERIK GALLAGHER, MD





ELIZABETH MCLARNEY, MD CAQ-SPORTS MEDICINE



The ARIS

#### SECTION

page B1

Wednesday, April 10, 2024



Art of students in the Windham Central Supervisory Union will be exhibited at Crowell **Gallery at Moore Free** Library in Newfane through April.

# Student art for all the senses

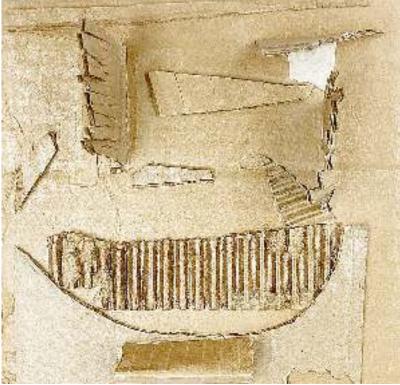
At Crowell Gallery, students from the region exhibit art projects inspired by the story of a deaf woman who experiences music through vibrations

By Alyssa Grosso The Commons

EWFANE—The Crowell Art Gallery at

reads them a book — this year's choice is Listen by Shannon Stocker — and they analyze what is happening throughout it, which Paugh says are "usuthe story.

After the book is chosen, teachers present it to the students and create projects around ally fairly open-ended." For this project, they focused on Glennie. Students and teachers talk about how you can feel music, and create abstract pieces of artwork around that theme using various materials. "They're exploring materials and also thinking of the connections between what they hear and what they create, Paugh says.



Moore Free Library will present an annual exhibition of art by K-5 students from NewBrook, Townsend, Jamaica School, Dover, Wardsboro, and Marlboro schools.

The free exhibit will run until Monday, April 29.

The art teachers involved are Suzanne Paugh, from NewBrook, Townsend, and Jamaica schools; Katy Hughes, from Dover and Warsboro schools; and Jamie Schilling, from Marlboro School.

Librarian Fiona Chevalier

"It takes all of us," she says. Listen is about the percussionist Evelyn Glennie, who is deaf and experiences music through vibrations.

Paugh says you can start to pick out a lot of interesting themes, which can easily inspire deeper thinking for the kids involved.

The exhibit consists of artwork inspired by the book teachers have chosen.

"We meet nearly every month, or every other month, to work on collaboration projects," Paugh explains.

#### **Involving** artists of different ages

Paugh discusses the students' different contributions to this ■ SEE STUDENT ART. B4

A student touch board, made of cardboard.

COURTESY OF SUZANNE PAUGE



Mary Lacy, left, and Corrine Yonce will be leading the installation of a mosaic at Pliny Park in Brattleboro.

Berkley & Veller

Realtors

Greenwood Country

## Mosaic Project takes steps toward fruition

Organizers envision a smashing success but seek donations to unlock state funding for mural at Pliny Park in Brattleboro

#### By Annie Landenberger The Commons

RATTLEBORO—With the launch of an online fundraising campaign and two main events a Smash Party this Saturday and a Co-creation Celebration on Saturday, April 20 — an initiative to create a mosaic mural on the vacant wall of a downtown park is becoming a reality.

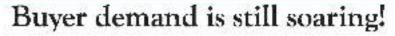
began as the brainchild of Greg Lesch, the executive director of the Brattleboro Area Chamber of Commerce, and Jamie Mohr, the executive director of Epsilon Spires, a not-for-profit organization housed at the former First Baptist Church on Main Street dedicated to "social impact through art and science."

Leaders for the park project, at the corner of High and Main streets, invite the community The Pliny Park Mosaic Project to partake, according to a news

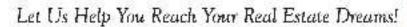
release, in "transforming the blank concrete wall [...] with beautiful original art that sparks local pride, supports cultural tourism in our region, and inspires a sense of community coownership of our public spaces."

With community input, the project organizers believe they can revitalize this neglected area of downtown Brattleboro with a vibrant collaborative artwork celebrating our exceptional ■ SEE MOSIAC PROJECT, B4

Publication of this week's Calendar is underwritten by BERKLEY & VELLER GREENWOOD COUNTRY REALTORS • www.berkleyveller.com



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## arts & community CALENDAR

#### THURSDAY



#### Music

B2

BRATTLEBORO Brattleboro Music Center: Spring Music Appreciation Salons: Featuring Moby Pearson 🛛 violinist, ensemble coach, orchestra conductor 🕅 continue with strings! Avital component of the orchestra, the string family on its own has a fantastically rich repertoire. From Handel to Holst, Mahler to Mendelssohn, Pearson samples some truly lush and marvelous compositions.

- Other dates and topics: 4/25 Ø Robert Schumann, May 9 "Pops!" Salon.
- Ś25. Brattleboro Music Center, 72 Blanche

Movse Way. Information: Please let us know you will be joining us: (802) 257-4523. 

#### The written word

SOUTH NEWFANE Pablo Medina Poetry Reading with guest Dede Cummings: World-renowned poet, author, Williamsville resident Pablo Medina reads from his newly released book of poetry, "Sea of Broken Mirrors." This new collection offers questions and incantations. Full of lush sonics and surreal vet contemporary imagery, it presents his take on biblical canticles - work grounded in descriptions of VT's nature still beautiful despite ravages of global warming I as well as memories of his youth and family.
 7 p.m. Born in Cuba and raised there

until age of 12, Medina infuses his work with Cuban culture. For him, cultural identity is not a static reality but a vessel riding the sea into the unknown. The poems explore how the diminishment of self (indeed. its ultimate disappearance) can be a way of engaging with the world, the essence of which is found in the language of poetry. Poet/publisher Dede Cumminas joins as Medina's special guest. Proceeds from book sales at this event will be donated to the South Newfane Schoolhouse accessibility ramp project.

Free. South Newfane Schoolhouse, 387 Dover Rd. Information: 802-348-7159; snschoolhouse@gmail.com.

#### **Kids and families**

BRATTLEBORO Sing & Dance with **Robin:** This lovely class is an enriching musical experience for toddlers and preschoolers, designed to support healthy cognitive,

physical, and social development. Children sing, clap, stomp, dance, play along with curriculum of traditional and modern folk songs. Parents will be encouraged to fully sing and participate with their child in the class.

▶ 10:30 - 11:30 a.m.

 Free.
 Brooks Memorial Library, 224 Main St. Information: 802-254-5290: brookslibraryvt.org. . . . . . . . . .

#### **Community building**

WILMINGTON Senior Solutions and Windham Aging host: Listening Session - Cost of Living and Housing for Seniors in our Community: Join this community conversation to learn about/share thoughts

#### THURSDAY CONT.

on needs, concerns, ideas for caring for our older population. Residents face changing needs as they get older. The community will need more health care, adapted or different housing, help with transportation, more caregivers, new ways of social engagement. We need to work together to share our ideas about how to adapt - both personally and with organizations serving Windham County.

12 noon - 1:30 p.m.

Free.

 Old Firehouse, 18 Beaver St. Informa-tion: Renee Woliver, Senior Solutions Communications and Outreach Director: (802) 365-3733. . . . . . . . . . .

#### **Community meals**

**GUILFORD** Guilford Cares Food Pantry: Shop from a grocery list of canned goods, packaged items, produce, dairy, meats and more. All are welcome.

3 - 4 p.m. Open every Thursday for curbside service. Free.

 Broad Brook Community Center/ Grange, 3940 Guilford Center Rd. Information: More information: Pat Haine, Pantry Director, 802-254-0626.

#### FRIDAY



#### Music

BRATTLEBORO Brattleboro-based Eloise & Company is joined by Rachel Aucoin: Eloise & Co. is a shapeshifting ensemble, often a duo, today a case a trio with piano. Becky Tracy on fiddle, octave fiddle, vocals and Rachel Bell on accordion and vocals. Eloise & Co. plays a dynamic range of music including gritty French folk groove tunes, energetic Celtic reels, soulful waltzes, lively Quebecois tunes.

 7 p.m. This trio invites you into their shared musical delight with a variety of music ranaina from old traditional tunes to their own new compositions, all infused with the magnetism that drew them together in the first place. ► \$20 In advance, \$25 at door.

 Brattleboro Music Center, 72 Blanche Moyse Way. Information: 802-257-4523; bmcvt.org. **PUTNEY** Next Stage Arts Project and Twilight Music present "Ordinary Elephant" and "Early Risers" (n-Person / Livestream): Enjoy acoustic folk music from far and near by Louisiana-based

Ordinary Elephant and Putney-based Early 7:30 p.m. Next Stage provides beer, wine, cocktail cash bar.
\$20 in advance , \$25 at door / \$10

livestream. Next Stage Arts Project, 15 Kimball Hill.

Ticketing: www.nextstagearts.org/events-calendar.html More information: Call 802-387-0102 or visit nextstagearts.org.

#### . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . Well-being

BRATTLEBORO Reiki 1 Healing Class: Discover Reiki self-treatment, the founda tion of Reiki practice. Then learn how to

#### FRIDAY CONT.

share Reiki with your family and friends, including your pets--for your lifetime. This training is taught over a weekend, beginning Friday evening and ending Sunday afternoon. Learn from Rebecca Rueter, Reiki Master in Usui Shiki Ryoho since 1988 Friday: 6-9 p.m., Saturday: 9:30-5 p.m., Sunday: 12:30-5 p.m.

Through Sunday, April 14. \$200. \$50 deposit holds your place for

 all three classes.
 Reiki Healing Arts Vermont, 137 Maple St. Information: More information: 802-275-7434 or text/call: reikivt@gmail.com.

#### **Community building**

BRATTLEBORO Community Sing-Along: Sing-along will feature a songbook of well-known songs from many traditions (folk, golden oldies, gospel, Beatles, old pop and rock, show tunes, etc.) We will take turns choosing what to sing and the lyrics will be projected on a screen for all to see. There will be guitar accompaniment and a song leader to help guide the music.

 7-9 p.m. See library announcement at: https://brookslibraryvt. org/event/community-sing-along.
 Event is open to the public, and accessible

to people with disabilities. Free.

 Brooks Memorial Library, 224 Main St. Information: For more information contact Rich Grumbine at richgrumbine1@gmail.

#### SATURDAY



Music

**BRATTLEBORO** "Second Saturday with Sharon & Daniel": Sing-Along at Latchis Pub: Evening focuses on classic sing-along pop anthems. With playful harmonies, acoustic guitars, percussion, keyboards and upright bass, Sharon Leslie and Daniel Kasnitz perform fresh renditions of classic hits with a funky, jazzy twist. From standards to captivatingly re-worked top-40 to seasonal favorites, Sharon & Daniel make musical merriment in many ways. Come sing, dance and make merry!
 7:30 - 10 p.m. "Singing together breaks

down division and sows joy. We invite folks to join in and participate in creating the music.".

Free. Latchis Pub & Latchis Underground,

6 Flat St. Information: More information: sharonanddaniel.com and sharonanddaniel.com.

#### The written word

**BELLOWS FALLS** Poetry Open Mic in celebration of National Poetry Month: Our community is invited to read original or favorite poems. Launched by the Academy of American Poets in April 1996, National Poetry Month celebrates poets' integral role in our culture and that poetry matters. It's now the largest literary celebration worldwide, with tens of millions of readers, students, K-12 teachers, librarians, booksellers, literary events curators, publishers,

#### SATURDAY CONT.

families, and ⊠ of course ⊠ poets, marking poetry's important place in our lives.
2-3 p.m. Sign-ups begin at 1:30 p.m.

Free. Rockingham Free Public Library, 65 Westminster St. Information: More information: reference@rockinghamlibrary.org, 802-463-4270, or stop by the Library.

#### **Kids and families**

BRATTLEBORO Buying-Selling Coins, Paper \$, Comics, Stamps, Sports-Cards, Pokemon Cards: Tri Town Coin, Postcard and Sports Card Collector's Club will host a couple of guest dealers from NH and MA. Area collectors of all ages are invited to meet various hobbyists.

8 a.m.: Club business meeting. 9 a.m.-3 p.m.: Buying and selling, door prizes. 2:30 p.m.: After family-fun day of buying and selling collectibles, dealers will ioin the Tri Town Numismatic Society for its monthly meeting.

Entry to event is free of charge. Holiday Inn Express, 100 Chickering Dr. Information: Set up a card table to sell interesting items by calling show chairman

at 802-379-2353 or email pepsijoseph@ yahoo.com.

BRATTLEBORO Caregiver & Me Cooking Class: Mac'n'Cheese and a Pickle: In this class, we will be making two delicious recipes by New York Times columnist Melissa Clark. Ages 0-18 with a parent or caregiver.
 Choose from one of two sessions: 10:30-

11:45 a.m. or 1:30-2:45 p.m. Free.

 Brattleboro Food Co-op Community Room, 7 Canal St. Information: Registration required: BFC.coop/events.

BRATTLEBORO Hike & Seek: Vernal Pool Mysteries: Family adventure for children ages 5 to 11 and their caregivers, offered in collaboration by Boys & Girls Club Brattleboro and Bonnyvale Environmental Education Center.

Center, 1221 Bonnyvale Rd. Information:

10 a.m. - 12 noon. Free. Bonnyvale Environmental Education

#### Learn more and sign up at BEEC.org. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .

Well-being **PUTNEY** A Celebration of Earth: An Evening with Bill McKibben, Douglas Brinkley, and Ben Cosgrove (In-Person/ Livestream): Conversations in the Anthropocene developed and moderated by Vanessa Vadim. Books will be available for purchase on site or preorder from Everyone's Books in Brattleboro.

7:30 p.m. lecture and music. \$15 in person, \$10 livestream. Advance

ticketing closes two hours before showtime. Next Stage Arts Project, 15 Kimball Hill.

Information: nextstagearts.org/eventscalendar.html.

**Community building** 

VERNON Coffee with Coffey - Sara Coffey, State Representative Windham-1/ Vernon & Guilford: Join me in Vernon for my monthly Coffee with Coffey hour. Share updates, plans, your priorities and get answers to any questions you have about any issues we are debating in Montpelier. This is a great way to connect with neighbors and discuss issues you care about.

10 - 11 a.m. Free.

Vernon Free Library, 567 Governor Hunt Rd. Information: 802-257-0150.

BELLOWS FALLS Welcome to the Community Meet and Greet (Rockingham Incremental Development Working Group): We are thrilled you have relocated to our community and want you to feel welcome. The meeting will be informal with a chance for participants to introduce themselves and learn more about the broad range of resources the community offers. Join us to welcome people who have recently moved to the community, as well as long-time residents.

10:30 - 12 noon. This is the 3rd Meet & Greet we've hosted since last April. RIDWG (www.rockinghamvt.org/inc-dev working-group-resources) is made up of local residents and stakeholders looking at small-scale development/investment in the Village of Bellows Falls and Town of Rockinaham. We feel that meeting each other in a relaxed and informal environment is at the heart community development. Hosted by The Rockingham Incremental Develop-ment Working Group (RIDWG), along with the Rockingham Arts and Museum Project (RAMP) and Brattleboro Development Credit Corp.

Free. Rockingham Free Public Library, 65
 Westminster St. Information: arah Lang at RockinghmaIDWG@gmail.com, RSVPS are appreciated. · • •

#### **Beyond Description**

BRATTLEBORO Future Pliny Park Mosaic Mural - Smash Party!: Bring small durable objects and ceramics to donate to the mural. Come prepared to smash ceram ics into pieces to be incorporated into the finished mural 1 - 5 p.m.

Free. Contributions welcome: https:// www.patronicity.com/project/mosaic\_mu

ral in pliny park#!/. Plaza Park, 1 Main St. (btw. the Co-op and Brattleboro Museum).



Music

BRATTLEBORO UMass Percussion **Ensemble:** Members of UMass Percussion Ensemble, under direction of Ayano Kataoka, perform works for percussion by Bach, Burritt, Cage, Druckman, Stravinsky. Cello Suite No. 5 in C minor BWV 1011 [Prelude, Allemande, Courante, Sarabande Gavotte I, Gavotte II, Gigue]. J.S. Bach (1685-1750), Scirocco, Michael Burriett (b. 1962). Forever and Sunsmell, John Cage 1912-1992. Reflections on Nature of Water, Jacob Druckman (1928-1996). Tango, Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971). Circus Polka, Stravinsky.

▶ 7 p.m. Performers: Robert Grahmann. marimba. Philip Hanifin, marimba. Clara Montes, voice; Sejeong Pyo, drums; Robert Grahmann, Chinese cymbal. Sejeong Pyo, marimba. Sejeong Pyo and Robert Grah-mann, marimbas.Sejeong Pyo and Robert Grahmann, marimbas,

\$10 (free for BMAC members). Purchase tickets at in adviance or at the door (subject to availability.

 Brattleboro Music Center, 72 Blanche Moyse Way. Information: For accessibil-ity questions/requests, email office@ brattleboromuseum.org or call 802-257-0124 x 101.

Deep Dive: Understanding & Appreciat-ing Hindustani Classical Music (Zoom): Three online sessions on Sundays: 4/14 4/21, 4/28. Beyond first impressions and comparisons, let's take a deep dive into understanding Hindustani, or north Indian classical, music on its own terms. Join Joe Veena' Eisenkramer, award-winning Indian slide guitarist, for a series of interactive workshops that will provide you with the information you need to become a rasika or informed listener of Hindustani music 12 p.m. April 14, 21, 28. Joel "Veena" Eisenkramer: "Purpose of these sessions is to illuminate some of the structure, performance practice, other salient features of Hindustani/ north Indian classical music to enhance our eniovment while listening and to open a realm of deeper interactio with the music. This music is deep and multilayered, meaning that as one studies the music, gains more familiarity, they become aware of additional lavers of meaning and complexity. Our goal is to give you the basic tools for understanding and appreciating the music allowing you to experience, examine, reflect on great recordings/performances. As understanding grows and you connect some of your prior expertise, you may find, as I have, that the study of Hindustani music is in harmony with a journey for personal growth." \$18 for one session - live interactive lecture with recording. Zoom. Information: tinyurl. com/3hwet36p. BRATTLEBORO Composer/pianist Chris Bakriges performs "The Golden Rule" at First Congregational Church: Enjoy a special musical worship program that responds to contemporary social divisions and world events. The ideal of "The Golden Rule" will be explored through a musical, literary and scriptural interpreta tion of Norman Rockwell's painting of the same name. Composer/pianist Chris Bakriges will respond musically to the image that was a precursor of the religious and socially conscious subjects Rockwell would later famously illustrate. ▶ 10 - 11 a.m. Free. ► First Congregational Church of West Brattleboro, 880 Western Ave. Information If more information is needed, call (802) 254-9767 or e-mail fccwb1770@gmail. com.

#### SUNDAY CONT.

socks with holes, favorite jeans that would be perfect if not for a rip in the knee, or sweaters with moth holes? Bring your ailing fabric items to work on them in the company of others. Advice and support are always available, but you'll be the mender of your own items. Sewing machines and darning tools are available to use during the Bee

Putney Public Library, 55 Main St.

Information: 802-387-4407; putneylibrary.

**Ideas and education** 

the Classroom & the Field (Session 4: "The Small and Speedy": Take a close

look at our often overlooked mammalian

moles, mice and voles, Rabbits and hares,

and our four species of tree squirrels. Be

Bonnyvale Environmental Education Center, 1221 Bonnyvale Rd. Information:

BRATTLEBORO Palestine Film Series

Resistance: In a short documentary, "Oslo

Accords: Failure or Betrayal," 30 years after the Accords were signed Palestinians reflect

Wanted 18" tells the true story of a Palestin-

ian community in the late 1980s buying 18

dairy cows. The Israeli army declares the

cows "dangerous for the security of the

State of Israel." The film uses stop-motion

animation, drawings, re-enactments, inter

views, humor, wit to illustrate the power of

Latchis (Films), 50 Main St. Information: 802-246-1500; latchistheatre.com.

MONDAY

**BRATTLEBORO** Lio Kuok-Wai on Piano:

Benefit for Music School Scholarships:

Brattleboro Music Center, 72 Blanche

Moyse Way. Information: 802-257-4523;

BRATTLEBORO Brattleboro Music Center: Pianist Lio Kuok-Wai Featured

at Midday Scholarship Benefit Concert:

Kinderszenen Op.15, Kreisleriana Op.16, and Fantasie Op.17. Praised by Vancouver

Sun as a "musician's musician," the Macau

Program includes Robert Schumann's

born pianist's dedication, intelligence,

artistic accomplishments have earned

him a splendid reputation in the classical

of Music under Gary Graffman, pianist Lio Kuok-Wai is a recipient of the Avery Fisher Career Grant administered by Lincoln Cen-

ter, Career Advancement Award given by Musical Fund Society of Philadelphia, Schol-

arship Awards by Macau Cultural Affairs Bureau and Feltsman Piano Foundation.

By donation.
 Brattleboro Music Center, 72 Blanche

Moyse Way. Information: 802-257-4523;

1 p.m. A graduate of the Curtis Institute

Robert Schumann, Kinderszenen Op.15,

Kreisleriana Op.16, Fantasie Op.17.

1 p.m. Admission by donation.

4 - 6 p.m. Admission by donation.

nonviolent

Music

bmcvt.org.

music field.

bmcvt.org.

- Secret Negotiations & Palestinian

on their significance and impact. "The

. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .

prepared to be charmed and amazed.

12:30 - 3 p.m. \$30, \$20 BEEC members.

Film and video

802-257-5785; beec.org.

neighbors⊠ we'll learn about shrews,

BRATTLEBORO Mammals of Winter - In

1 - 4 p.m. Free and open to the public.

org/events.



Summer



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**Classes start June 24th** All Skill Levels, Ages 11-18

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SUMMER BREAK CIRCUS CAMPS

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Weekly camps from June 20 - August 241

MORE INFO (802) 254-9780 Brattleboro, VT CircusSchool.org





REGISTER: BRATTLEBOROTV.ORG/VIDEO-CAMP



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rivergalleryschool.org

#### SUMMER 💐 Brattleboro **PROGRAM** Recreation & Parks Registration

#### **REGISTER NOW!**

Register in person at the Gibson Aiken Center 207 Main Street, Brattleboro. Call 802-254-5808. Monday - Friday: 9am - Noon / 1pm - 4:30pm

To register online, scan the QR code, or visit brattleboro.gov/recreation-and-parks

#### **Community building**

**VERNON** Vernon Historians: Meeting and Program: People enjoy seeing rolling meadows/fields of corn on farmland in the southern part of town. Those fields, plus farm houses/ barns, have been in the Dunklee family for 5 generations - part of Vern-Mont Farm owned/operated by Jeff Dunklee and his family. Have you wondered what the farm's history entails? Why one large farmhouse is called "Dickinson House"? What was its function earlier? How many cows are milked on the farm now? We know it's not easy and have seen many

operatin
2:30 p.m. with guest speaker Jeff Dunklee. Join the Vernon Historians as Jeff Dunklee shares stories, pictures, history of his generational family farm. Let's celebrate their contributions to the town and the privilege it is for us to enjoy the beauty around us that his family and other farm families in town, have helped to preserve. Delicious refreshments will be served. Parking available at community center and across the street at Vernon Elementary School. (Note: Membership meeting at 2 p.m.). Free and everyone is welcome

Governor Hunt House and Community Center, Governor Hunt Rd.

#### **Arts and crafts**

**PUTNEY** Mending Bee at Putney Library: Do you have a pile of nice woo

#### TUESDAY

#### Well-being

BRATTLEBORO Brattleboro Walk-in Clinic: Primary medical treatment for patients ages 18 to 64 in our community who do not have health insurance or who

cannot afford their high deductibles or co-insurance. 5 - 6:30 p.m. on Tuesdays. Brattleboro Walk-In Clinic, 191

Clark Ave. Information: 802-251-8484: brattleborowalkinclinic.com

#### WEDNESDAY



#### **Community meals**

WEST DUMMERSTON Spaghetti Dinner and 50/50 Raffle: Menu: Spaghetti, home made sauce, garlic bread, tossed salad, drinks and dessert.

▶ 6 - 7:30 p.m.

\$15 for adults, \$10 for 12 years old and under, free for 5-year-olds and under, \$45 maximum per family.

Dummerston Community Center, 166 West St. Information: RSVP: (802) 257-0784.

To submit your event: calendar@ commonsnews.org

> Deadline: 5 p.m. Friday

## Literary Cocktail Hour looks at 'Eve and Human Evolution' with Cat Bohannon

Cat Bohannon will talk about how the female body drove 200 million years of human evolution at this month's free online Literary Cocktail Hour, a virtual event presented by the Brattleboro Literary Festival, on Friday, April 12, at 5 p.m.

Bohannon's new book, Eve: How the Female Body Drove 200 Million Years of Human Evolution, is described as "a myth-busting, eye-opening landmark account of how humans evolved, offering a paradigm shift in our thinking about what the female body is, how it came to be, and how this evolution still shapes all our lives today.'

Why do women live longer than men? Why are women more likely to get Alzheimer's? Why do girls score better at every academic subject than boys until puberty, when suddenly their scores plummet? Is sexism useful for evolution? "And why, seriously why, do women have to sweat through our sheets every night when we hit menopause?" asks Bohannon.

In *Eve*, the author covers the past 200 million years to explain the specific science behind the development of the female sex with boundless curiosity and sharp wit," say event promoters.

We need a kind of user's

BRATTLEBORO-Author manual for the female mammal," writes Bohannon. "A nononsense, hard-hitting, seriously researched (but readable) account of what we are. How female bodies evolved, how they work, what it really means to biologically be a woman. Something that would rewrite the story of womanhood. This book is that story. We have to put the female body in the picture. If we don't, it's not just

feminism that's compromised." Called a sweeping revision of human history, *Éve* is "an urgent and necessary corrective for a world that has focused primarily on the male body for far too long," say organizers. "It will completely change what you think you know about evolution and why Homo sapiens has become such a successful and dominant species."

Bohannon is a researcher and author with a doctorate from Columbia University where she studied the evolution of narrative and cognition. Her essays and poems have appeared in Scientific American, Mind, Science Magazine, The Best American Nonrequired Reading, The Georgia Review, The Story Collider, and Poets Against the War. She lives with her family in Seattle.

To register for this event, visit bit.ly/LitCocktail37.

## Eloise & Company with Rachel Aucoin at the BMC April 12

BRATTLEBORO— tunes. Brattleboro-based band Eloise & Company is joined by Rachel Aucoin in a performance at the Brattleboro Music Center Friday, April 12, at 7 p.m. Eloise & Co. is a shifting en-

semble — often a duo and, at other times, a trio with piano or guitar. With Becky Tracy on fiddle, octave fiddle, and vocals and Rachel Bell on accordion and vocals, Eloise & Co. plays a range of music including compositions, "all infused with French folk groove tunes, Celtic reels, waltzes, and Quebecois

In 2017, Tracy and Bell found themselves in a spontaneous jam session with Quebecois pianist Rachel Aucoin, and the resulting musical chemistry convinced them they had to play

together again. The trio "invites the audience into their shared musical delight with a variety of music," say organizers, ranging from old traditional tunes to their own new the magnetism that drew them together in the first place."



COURTESY PHOTO Eloise & Company appears at the Brattleboro Music Center on April 12.

Tickets are \$20 (\$25 at the door) and are available online on the BMC website at **bmcvt**. org, by calling 802-257-4523, or by emailing info@bmcvt.org.

## 'Artisans of Dummerston' exhibit opens Sunday, April 21

DUMMERSTON—The p.m. the quarterly meeting will office manager, Elsie Tier; and her Dummerston Historical Society announces a new arrangement of exhibits for its openings the first and third Sunday afternoons, April 21 — June 2, 1 to 3 p.m. The site is the Society's schoolhouse located in Dummerston Center next to the Town Office.

The Society's recent Dummerston Artisans Exhibit was so popular that contributors have been invited to submit new material for a second display. Similar exhibits were mounted years ago, and organizers say they "are pleased to find once again that Dummerston is richly endowed with creative talent."

Rodrica Tilley is the first exhibitor, showing pastel landscape paintings from the opening reception, 1–2 p.m. Sunday, April 21, through June 2.

commencee, featuring a program by veterinarian Dr. Clyde Johnson.

Johnson will share his experiences in his long medical career in Dummerston and, in anticipation of the event, Society members have put up a collection of animal photos from their archives.

Among many other scenes are images of horses drawing hay wagons, a six-team coach, a pig milking a cow, calves attended by two smiling boys, a horse with its proud owner, and a big bull led by a staff stretched in from the side of the photo to the ring in his nose. That is how he could be controlled.

Kept on for now are artifacts from the Dr. Grace Burnett collection, including a number of photographs; a genealogy; a me-Following the reception, at 2 morial tribute by her longtime

medical library of some 40 volumes. Dr. Burnett (1886–1963) was the first woman physician in Brattleboro and third in the state. Her nearly 50-year career began when horseback was the best way to reach remote rural households. Among her varied medical services was the delivery of thousands of babies.

For more information, contact Muriel Taylor at 802-380-7525 or Gail Sorenson at gailsvt@gmail. com. Other viewing times are available by special appointment. Admission is free, and the building is handicapped accessible.

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4:00 & 6:35

2:15 & 6:35

2:15 4:00

**CIVIL WAR** 

FRIDAY

MON.-THUR

MON.-THUR

FRI. & SAT.

SUNDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

SUNDAY MON.-THUR.

#### 118 Elliot hosts Julian Gerstin Sextet on April 12 BRATTLEBORO—The Julian Milford Graves. His interests but is no strict traditionalist. She continue to explore both ends says she also delights in experi-

Gerstin Sextet will be in concert on Friday, April 12, at 8 p.m., at 118 Elliot.

The sextet formed in 2016 and has performed all over New England. "It is a powerhouse of local creative musicians," say organizers, featuring Anna Patton on clarinet, Don Anderson on trumpet, Eugene Uman on piano, Wes Brown on bass, and Ben James on drum set in addition to Gerstin's percussion. They will present a preview of their up-coming recording, Songbirds of the Deep Sea.

"The music is full of melody and wit, creative improvisations of the spectrum. He has studied and performed traditional music in Martinique, Cuba, and Ghana, and played with experimental jazz artists Joel Harrison and Eddie Gale. He says he also loves the com-

munal spirit of playing for dancers, and has worked with Afropop bands Kotoja and Zulu Spear, punk artist Richard Hell, New Orleans brass bands and zydeco groups, samba and salsa ensembles. Currently, he appears with the Puerto Rican traditional drumming group Bomba de Aquì, and leads that group's jazz

mental improvisation.

Trumpeter Don Anderson is a salsa veteran, currently working with Joe Veléz's Creatión, and anchors the first trumpet chair in the Vermont Jazz Center Big Band. "His soulful and imaginative improvising lends breadth and depth to the sextet," say organizers.

Eugene Uman, piano, is di-rector of the Vermont Jazz Center as well as a composer and bandleader. He has deep roots in jazz, rock, and Latin music, and has performed with Bo Diddley, Sheila Jordan, Sonny Fortune, Bobby Sanabria, and

the reggae group Rebel Nation. He says his expansive musical imagination draws on Indian and African rhythms, Broadway tunes, and classical piano.

Ben James, drum set, has performed with musicians ranging from Nigerian drummer Olatunji to avant-garde jazz saxophonist John Tchicai, to rocker Nels Cline.

Admission to the concert is \$20, but no one will be turned away for lack of funds.

and thoughtful compositions, burning percussion grooves and heartfelt melodies," according to a news release. "Based in jazz, it draws on Gerstin's lifelong immersion in music of Africa and the Caribbean, and recent explorations in Balkan and Arabic traditions."

Gerstin explains the guiding concept of the new music. "Imagine being deep under the waves, watching fantastic creatures swim in and out of sight, amazing to see but never staying, he said. "That's music. Always surprising and unknowable."

The music's varied sounds evoke Afrocuban rumba, Barcelona street fairs, lightning and thunder, a talking forest, say organizers. Drums from Cuba and Martinique mix with rhythms of Gerstin's own invention. "There's straightahead funky jazz too."

Gerstin began studying traditional African and Caribbean drumming in the 1970s, but at the same time apprenticed with avant-garde jazz master Jazz and samba ensembles at the Vermont Jazz Center, which are

always open to new students. the contradance band Elixir, is at age 18, was two years on the the brains behind the Zara Bode Little Big Band, and leads the 16-voice women's jazz choir The Soubrettes. Patton is an in-demand musician and instructor nationally in the contradance scene, Wadada Leo Smith, as well as led

manifestation, Bombajazzeando. many others. Living part-time Gerstin also teaches the Latin in Colombia, Uman brings that country's rhythms to his playing.

Bassist Wes Brown has perhaps the deepest jazz pedigree in the Anna Patton, clarinet, fronts group: his first professional gig, road with pianist Earl "Fatha" Hines. Brown has also worked with a stellar array of contemporary experimentalists: Anthony Braxton, Marilyn Crispell, and

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Robert Schumann: Kinderszenen Op.15, Kreisleriana Op.16, Fantasie Op.17

## Monday, April 15 • 1 pm

BMC 72 Blanche Moyse Way, Brattleboro, VT A benefit for Music School Scholarships Admission by Donation

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#### **THE ARTS**

## National Poetry Month celebrated with 'Poems Around Town'

BRATTLEBORO—In celebration of the art and craft of poetry, a group of organizations led by Write Action has filled downtown with poems submitted by poets living in the area, throughout the state, or in the tri-state area of southern Vermont.

**B**4

Commemorating National Poetry Month in April, "Poems Around Town" is co-sponsored by Brooks Memorial Library and the Brattleboro Literary Festival, with the participation of numerous downtown businesses in whose shop windows the poems will appear through the entire month.

Poets whose work is up range from the well-known will be announced.

- including two past Vermont poets laureate, Sydney Lea and Chard deNiord — to those who have only recently discovered their poet's voice.

A site guide to the poems can be found at the Brattleboro Food Co-op, Everyone's Books, the Brattleboro Area Chamber of Commerce, Latchis Theatre, and Brooks

Memorial Library. On Saturday, April 27 at 2 p.m., poets will participate in an in-person reading at Brooks Memorial Library, featuring many of those whose works are represented in Poetry Around Town.

More details on the reading

ent of the Avery Fisher Career

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Since his concerto de-

but at age 10 with the Macau

Orchestra at the opening cere-

mony of the Macau Arts Festival in 2000, Kuok-Wai has per-

formed with orchestras that in-

clude the China Philharmonic,

Hong Kong Philharmonic,

Camerata Salzburg, Kansas City

Symphony Orchestra, Hangzhou Philharmonic Orchestra, Houston

Symphony Orchestra, and con-

ductors Li Xincao, Edo de Waart, Francois Xavier-Roth,

*L* ife is like a piano. What you get out of it depends on how you play it.

**G** et up from that pi-ano. You hurtin' its

-Tom Lehrer

-JELLY ROLL

MORTON

and Michael Stern.

feelings.

Feltsman Piano Foundation.

## Pianist Lio Kuok-Wai featured at midday BMC scholarship benefit concert

BRATTLEBORO-Pianist Graffman, Kuok-Wai is a recipi-Lio Kuok-Wai performs at the Brattleboro Music Center Monday, April 15, at 1 p.m. in a concert benefiting BMC Music School scholarships.

Admission is by donation. The program will include Robert Schumann's "Kinderszenen,' Op.15; "Kreisleriana," Op.16;

and "Fantasie," Op.17. "Praised by the Vancouver Sun as a 'musician's musician," organizers write in a press release, 'the Macau-born pianist's dedication, intelligence, and artistic accomplishments have already earned him a splendid reputa-tion in the classical music field."

A graduate of the Curtis Institute of Music under Gary



Next Stage hosts acoustic duos Ordinary Elephant, Early Risers

and Twilight Music present an evening of acoustic folk music from far and near by Louisianabased Ordinary Elephant and Putney-based Early Risers at Next Stage, 15 Kimball Hill, on

Friday, April 12, at 7:30 p.m. Folk duo Ordinary Elephant has spent the better part of the last decade on a never-ending tour that's earned Crystal and Pete Damore critical acclaim and made fans of luminaries like Tom Paxton and Mary Gauthier. In 2017, the couple took home the performances are similarly the International Folk Music transportive, fueled by delicately

the strength of their breakout album Before I Go; and, two years later, they returned with the similarly lauded Honest, which the Associated Press hailed as "one of the best Americana albums of the year.'

According to the artists' website, the duo's new self-titled CD showcases "the arresting power of the couple's gorgeous harmonies and intricate fretwork. The songs are timeless, rooted in rich, character-driven storytelling, and

PUTNEY-Next Stage Arts Award for Artist of the Year on intertwined banjo, guitar, and octave mandolin." It's the sound of "sincerity and commitment," they say, "of patience and gratitude, of learning to let go of expectation and revel in the simple beauty of the moment."

Early Risers are the Vermontbased folk duo of Ashley Storrow and Putnam Smith. Both rootsy and lyric-driven, their original songs feature close vocal harmonies and arrangements on an array of instruments: banjo, guitar, mandolin, piano, and shruti box. After pursuing separate solo singer-songwriter careers, they

joined forces in 2015 and have since toured across the country, from Maine to Texas, California to Vancouver. Their debut album, Making Life Sweet, went to No. 1 on the national Folk DJ Charts in November 2019.

Tickets are \$20 in advance, \$25 at the door, and \$10 for access to the livestream. Advance tickets are available at nextstagearts.org. Next Stage will provide a beer, wine, and cocktail cash bar. For information, call 802-387-0102.

FROM SECTION FRONT

## Student art

project and how different age groups are able to participate.

Students are working on re-sponding to music through abstract art, creating instruments focusing on the idea of vibrations and sound waves, building drums out of papier-mâché and found objects, and creating touch boards.

"One of the themes we thought about was accessibility of the arts, because the person highlighted in the book can't hear but she likes to become a perfect professional percussionist.

Students thought about how an art show would be for someone who couldn't see. "That part of the show, people wanted to touch the relief so they can experience it," Paugh says.

Paugh explained that the older students are creating rain sticks, focusing on considering how objects of different sizes can move through a space and create different sounds based on their vibrations.

The younger students are making macaracas and filling them with various objects.

#### Impacting younger artists

"I think it's pretty rare that youth and young artists are taken seriously and displayed in real gallery spaces...usually it's classroom art shows in the hallway on bulletin boards," Paugh says.

The older students get their work taken more seriously, she



#### community."

memories of the space — what

really loved the willingness to jump in with both feet that most kids have. [...] I can give them all different artistic and creative challenges, different new materials, and they're pretty much pumped for it all," Paugh explained.

sizes can move through a space and create different sounds based on their vibrations.

"It's kind of like you explore it Paugh has always taught with them, which is really fun.'

The Crowell Art Gallery is in the rear of the Moore Free Library, a nonprofit private library reliant on charitable donations, grants, and community support. The gallery is open during the library's operating hours: Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, 1 to 5 p.m.; Thursday, 1 to 6 p.m.; and Saturday, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

OURTESY OF SUZANNE PAUGH

#### FROM SECTION FRONT

Pliny Park itself is owned by the town's Recreation & Parks Department, which has enforced

Three students create rain sticks. The objective: to learn how objects of different

says, and are given more of a pro- elementary students. "I've always fessional space for their work to be displayed in.

"I think they feel really proud to see their work hanging and seeing strangers looking at it and reacting to it and responding to it. [...] I feel very lucky that we're able to do it for our community."

a direct reminder of how we as they want the mural to reflect the

In terms of hoped-for partici-For locals, "the mural will be they like about Brattleboro, how pation, Mohr says: "I've tried to cast a pretty wide net, and hope-



individuals all contribute to the town's unique creative culture."

The mosaic project launched in late fall with a community gathering led by commissioned artists Mary Lacy and Corrine Yonce ["'A space for social connection and contemplation," Arts, Dec. 13, 2023].

Each artist has an "impressive background in creating largescale mural projects and mosaics that involve community engagement and social practice," the release continues. The installation depends on a range of donations, from the found objects and castoffs that will compose the mural to the hands-on creation of the mosaic — an art form that dates back nearly 5,000 years.

After the initial gathering last fall, a brainstorming session yielded a theme: water.

"We have the Connecticut River, and with climate change and the flooding and how rainy it's been, water's on everyone's minds," Mohr says.

"It was really kind of fun to hear people's ideas —to hear their

#### BRATTLEBORO MUSIC CENTER



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culture of Brattleboro and what fully it'll reverberate through that is for many different people," she continues.

"I love that aspect of what the finished piece will be — every-one who's contributed can come in and find their individual contributions within an entirety," Mohr says.

A big break The next big public event is the Smash Party at Pliny Park on April 13, from 1 to 5 p.m. The press release urges participants "to donate objects and smash ceramics into pieces to be incor-porated into the finished mural."

Objects can run the gamut: tiles, plates, beads, buttons, small toys, mirrors, plastic letters, personal trinkets.

"The memories and personal meanings contained within these objects," the news release projects, "will host a conversation among neighbors and strangers, creating a sense of collaboration, intimacy, discovery, and engagement within our shared public space."

"It'll be interesting to see what people bring," says Mohr, not-ing that a lot of "amazing" area ceramists have joined the brainstorming and will be donating "beautiful seconds."

"They want to be part of the process, to learn from the artists how the mosaic mural will be created," she says.

Mohr adds: "If it ends up raining, we might do it at Epsilon in the community space. I just really like the idea of doing it in Pliny Park because of visibility, but also so people can imagine what's going to happen. And we'll have chalk, too, so people can draw on the actual wall."

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other peoples' channels." People are "excited by the

cathartic idea of the smashing party," she says, "but I think they're also excited about the idea of incorporating things that have personal meaning into the wall, like a piece of favorite pottery that's chipped, but that has a memory attached. We've gotten quite a bit of enthusiastic response so far."

Following the smash party, which Lacy will guide, the public co-creation celebration on Saturday, April 20, from 2 to 5 p.m., will be, Mohr says, "where the artists will show people how to take the tiling and create designs that will later be added to the wall.'

She describes it as "a different kind of event," but says that the artists have found with past projects that "it's very meditative, and people begin talking and relating, so that'll be a very socially cohesive experience.'

We will have tables set up at Epsilon Spires so folks can sit and converse while sorting," she says.

"Part of the inspiration for the project is that [Pliny Park] is a little foreboding right now," Mohr notes. "If more people come in to enjoy it, it will be something for everyone. And [the mosaic mural] might change the character and the feel of it.

#### **Overcoming** 'weird hurdles'

The wall, which previously boasted a mural by area artist Terry Sylvester, "is owned by the Chamber of Commerce, which has given us their blessing as a partner. The Chamber is very supportive," Mohr says.

permitting and fee requirements - what Mohr describes as "weird hurdles that make it harder for people to have an impact.'

"But I want this to at least be an example that things can get done and you can push through, and then hopefully it'll be like the High Street Mural," Mohr says, referencing the 2022 community mural project on the nearby retaining wall. "People loved that so much — even folks who were critical of the idea have come around to be supportive and are really happy it happened.'

Mohr says that if all goes as planned and the needed funds are raised, the process will be completed in June, when Lacy and Yonce will co-create the mosaic mural with the objects donated, smashed, sorted, and arranged by the public.

For Brattleboro's July Gallery Walk, Mohr adds, "we'll do kind of an unofficial ribbon-cutting celebration.'

More than 280 have signed up to participate, "so if each of them gave 20 bucks we'd be over our goal of \$7,986.'

As of April 8, 26% of that goal has been met.

Mohr hopes to see donations of any amount at each upcoming event.

Through a Better Places grant from the state Agency of Commerce and Community Development, every donation is doubly matched, meaning that a \$25 gift becomes \$75 — and a big boon to the Brattleboro community spirit and aesthetic.

And, says Mohr in the release, "there are some fun perks for each giving level, ranging from stickers, mail art, and screen prints to sponsoring an 8-by-8 inch tile or special message.<sup>3</sup>

"We are trying to get everyone to donate, because if we don't reach the goal, it won't happen,' Mohr warns.

"And I'll have lots of pieces of broken ceramics [to deal with]," she adds with a laugh.

To donate to the mural project, visit patronicity.com/project/mosaic\_ *mural\_in\_pliny\_park* (patronicity. com/project/mosaic\_mural\_in\_ pliny\_park#!)/. For more on this project and the work and programming of Epsilon Spires, visit epsilonspires.org.



## **VOICES LIVE! FORUM**

## **Crushing the housing crisis**

What defines the housing crisis in Vermont, and what are some of the ideas that people are putting into place to address the problems? A community discussion.

Brattleboro OLLOWING ARE excerpts of a conversation about housing that took place virtually on March 18 as part of The Commons' Voices Live! series, which seeks to bring people together into a forum about difficult community topics and then, in turn, bring the conversation to a larger audience in the pages of the Voices section.

As framed by moderator Joyce Marcel, a frequent contributor to The Commons as a reporter and columnist writing on politics, housing, and homelessness, "the housing problem as we know it is a national problem, it's not a Brattleboro problem, and the solutions are many. Here, we are wrestling with: Why are we in this mess? And does it even matter? Or, What do we do about Act 250 — is the land use protection act hindering housing construction? Should we protect it?'

Other questions that the topic raises: "What kind of housing do we want? High-end? Affordable? Section 8? Do we want houses? Do we want apartments? Are they in the village centers or in the fields?"

And then there's the question of who would qualify for this housing.

"Housing for seniors is a very big issue all of a sudden," Marcel said. "I'm a senior now, and I'm living out in the middle of the woods on a dirt road. This is not going to be viable in another 10 years. Where do I go? There's no place in town. "What about the "not in my backyard" folks who don't like

change?

"Or, my favorite question of all," Marcel said. "Do we just let the boomers die, and then there'll be lots of housing? There'll be a glut! It's an issue, and we've got a lot to say about it.'

Vermont's U.S. representative, Becca Balint, discussed the Community Housing Act, a bill she recently filed, and she discussed how the legislation would address the housing crisis as well as the merits of drafting potential laws that have very little practical chance of seeing any action in the current Republican-controlled House of Representatives.

In the second half of the forum, a coterie of Brattleboro area professionals who are working toward solutions to the housing crisis -Chris Campany, Christine Hart, Sue Fillion, Craig Miskovich, and Jason Van Nest - discussed some of the demographic and economic forces that are creating the difficult housing situation.

## 'We don't have enough money in Vermont alone to help tackle that issue'



VOICES LIVE VIA BCTV

Top row: Craig Miskovich, Sue Fillion, Jason Van Nest. Second row: Christine Hart, Chris Campany, Becca Balint. Right: Moderator Joyce Marcel.





NOTE ON PROCESS: In the interests of the reader, text has been edited for clarity and concision in a way that intended to preserve the participants' meaning, ideas, and fundamental self-expression. In the interest of readability, this is not a full transcript. We encourage readers interested in engaging with these issues to view the original Voices Live! forum video at brattleborotv.org. As always, we want this not to be the last word on any of these issues — just the first. Reader responses are welcome at voices@ commonsnews.org.

talking about here. What are we talking about? What's actually going to nappen:

#### Rep. Balint files federal legislation to address the issue of providing enough housing at the national level, with hope of building bipartisan support

**BECCA BALINT**, U.S. representative (D-Vt.): I hear about the shortage of housing from Vermonters in every corner of the state, and it's very important to me and my whole team to work together to find solutions.

I recently introduced the Community Housing Act. It's federal legislation designed to tackle some of the biggest barriers to addressing our housing crisis both in Vermont and of course, nationally, since it is a federal bill. And we are trying to offer some creative solutions and some very big investments.

So it's hundreds of billions of dollars in housing investments nearly half a trillion dollars. And it is that big, because that's what's needed.

Vermont is feeling it acutely. Other states like New York and California are also feeling it acutely.

Pretty much every congressional district across the nation is dealing with a housing shortage. The estimate is that we are short over three million additional units of housing in order to meet the demand.

That's because housing, as you all know, sits at the nexus of so many of the challenges that we face in our communities: the national workforce crisis, the crushing income disparity, the devastating mental health crisis, our struggles with the opioid epidemic.

Vermonters know that we're in the middle of an acute crisis here, despite the great work that was done in the Legislature, both when I was there and after I left. We did invest millions of state and federal dollars into creating more housing, but we still have a lot more to do.

I hear from Vermonters constantly that they can't find housing, that they're worried that their kids and their grandkids aren't going to be able to stay in the state. And with some of the highest rates of homelessness per capita in the country, we need the power and the resources of the federal government to help. We don't have enough money in Vermont alone to help tackle that issue.

I always like to ground the conversation in the fact that housing is the foundation upon which all of our lives are built. We have to have access to safe housing, because it offers working families stability and opportunities that they need to succeed in whatever line of work

workers move from one part of Vermont to another to get better opportunities. If the housing isn't there, that's holding them back. And, of course, when we look at the mental health crisis and treatment of substance use disorder, safe and secure housing is completely at the center of getting people the help that everyone needs and deserves.

It's not just in our cities and our population centers - it's important that this bill offers some solutions for rural areas as well. Rural Vermonters are seeing a reduction in housing stock, because of the influx [of buyers] coming from the pandemic and post-pandemic.

So much of our housing stock is old. Across the country, we've also seen skyrocketing rents, because we have some predatory landlords and hedge funds buying up houses and rentals, and then essentially price fixing, which I can talk a little bit more about later.

So I'm very proud to have introduced this package, but I also know it is not all-inclusive.

A big part of the bill is community-based housing, which would increase the supply of affordable and deeply affordable housing. And we have some provisions in here to help keep renters in their home and keep rents affordable for the long term.

And you also talked about zoning issues and Act 250. We're really trying to incentivize eliminating the barriers to increasing the supply of housing. We've also included massive investments in the housing trust fund, to tap into the land trust model and shared equity model.

We don't need just short-term solutions — we need housing that is going to be affordable over the long term. The bill also increases a fee that is assessed on the [mortgage underwriting] work that Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac do, and that additional fee will go directly into the housing trust fund so we have a stable source of income going forward, and it will provide grants to states like Vermont to produce and preserve housing for low- and very-low-income families.

The rural-specific programs are also important for keeping Vermonters housed. Rural America is often left behind, so we have to make investments at the federal level that are not just geared toward population centers.

These investments [would help] individuals and families, but we know that making investments in housing also helps communities as a whole. That's why I'm here, to hear directly from our constituents. We want your feedback and we want to hear specifically: What are you seeing and experiencing in the housing market? And what else could we do at the federal level to help address our housing crisis?

**JOYCE MARCEL:** I just need some specific idea of what we're

**BALINT:** So there are many, many parts of the bill. We have something called the Housing Trust Fund, and it grants money to states to produce and preserve low- and very-low-income housing. We are wanting to invest \$450 billion.

And a lot of times in Congress you worry about the long-term solution for funding something like that, about the need to have a constant influx of cash to be able to grant out to states to build more housing. So we have proposed in this bill to increase a financial fee on Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, which would set aside additional money that would then flow into the housing trust fund. We'd grant this constant influx of cash to states for them to be able to build more what we call affordable and deeply-affordable [housing].

We'd also invest \$150 billion in the capital management fund, and this would give community development financial institutions money to focus on low-income communities to help finance loans that support affordable housing.

The top line is that there are essentially three buckets in the bill to make huge investments to increase the supply of housing. We know the housing market, from top to bottom, is short millions of units. So there are many, many provisions in here to literally increase the supply of housing.

Then we have rental supports in this bill to keep people housed when they may be struggling to pay rent. So we look at the Emergency Rental Assistance Program that was very successful during the pandemic, and we would make that a permanent fund to directly assist people when they come up short on their rent. We also would provide eviction protection grants.

So these are the three big buckets: building more housing, provisions to keep people housed, and increasing housing availability for rural renters.

Some price fixing is going on across the country with rental units. Many larger housing investors use [property management software] RealPage, which allows them to price-fix rental prices across a huge area of land, which of course makes it very difficult for people to feel like they're in any kind of a competitive market.

So we would charge the Department of Housing and Urban Development with making a database that landlords would have to send their information to so we can keep track through our antitrust work to make sure they wouldn't be price-fixing.

We're also excited about charging HUD and the Health and Human Services Division to come together to create a task force to figure out, How do we coordinate getting people substance use disorder treatment when they're in affordable housing? There are limitations to what can be done in terms of medical interventions in housing, and we feel like that has been a barrier which has prevented people from staying housed.

MARCEL: Wow. OK, that's... that's quite a lot. **BALINT:** Yeah, it's a big bill.

■ STORY CONTINUES



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**MARCEL:** What's the chance of this getting passed?

**BALINT:** Well, there's always a chance of parts of it getting passed this session. I'll just say that Democrats are not in the majority in the House.

#### **MARCEL:** But you're close.

**BALINT:** We are close. So we're always looking to see if there are parts of this that can go on to another bill that is moving. And I know from talking with other colleagues that more housing bills will be unrolled in the next few weeks, and we're hoping that we're going to be able to partner.

At this time, when we're in the minority, we want to put down some markers for how much money we really should be investing.

#### MARCEL: OK, we've got lots of questions.

From Chris Hart: "I applaud the inclusion of public housing in your bill and the removal of the Faircloth cap."

**BALINT:** In 1999, a federal cap was placed on the development of new public housing on how many units could be built. It's part of the reason we're in the mess that we're in right now.

So it's past time that we we repeal that to make it possible once again to develop new public housing.

**MARCEL:** That's good to know. Public housing capital improvements have been severely underfunded by HUD for decades. This is Chris again. "Have you considered an additional infusion of capital money to housing authorities so they can address the significant need for improvements in their very old housing?"

**BALINT:** Yes, we have, and we know the need is there and so really appreciate you making a plug for that. It is definitely on our list.

**MARCEL:** OK. "Can you please ask the congresswoman what is in her community housing act to support new homeownership?"

**BALINT:** There's a lot to support homeownership. We're going to be putting half a billion dollars in a shared equity housing fund that we're going to establish. This doesn't exist yet at the federal level. And it will award grants to eligible nonprofits and housing finance agencies to create, expand, and sustain shared-equity homeownership.

When you have equity that is shared with a nonprofit, it means that for as long as you are in that home, you are able to have sort of a fixed price that you know that you're going to be paying, and we want to keep that perpetually affordable over the long term.

There's a part of Section 8 that has never really been fully actualized or funded, and that's the Section 8 down-payment assistance programs, so you could use vouchers essentially to go toward not just rental, but homeownership — finally — which is how it was envisioned when it was first created.

One thing that's particular to Vermont is that we asked to increase the small minimum that goes to the state from \$3 to \$6 million, so that we will have more money flowing to our partners like the Windham & Windsor Housing Trust and the Champlain Housing Trust.

So we're constantly looking at both fully funding programs that exist or, where we can make a tweak in a program, to make it work more for Vermont.

We also want to permanently authorize the USDA Multifamily Preservation and Revitalization Program. This makes it possible for owners of multi-unit houses in rural areas to refinance, so they can continue to make units available for renters in rural areas. And there is also a section 521 in rental assistance in the USDA. It is making it possible for rural renters to stay in their homes. We want to reauthorize this program because it's up to expire.

**MARCEL:** OK. Chris Campany "just want[s] to note that a key issue to developing the quantity of housing that is needed today and into the future is public wastewater and water infrastructure."

**BALINT:** I agree, Chris. [We need to make sure] that that doesn't fall off our radar screen in terms of infrastructure investments that are needed, again, at the federal level. These are the kinds of investments that were made to build the suburbs, essentially.

We need that same level of investment in rural America to upgrade water and sewer because you're right — we can't support additional units without that happening.

The laborshed stretches from from Bennington and over to Keene and down to Greenfield and Northampton. What kinds of agreements are you thinking about with Hinsdale or with, you know, across the river there at Bellows Falls?

You've said that in some ways, we are part of the same housing community and labor community. So what could that look like?

**CAMPANY:** Really, it is just literally just getting the towns talking to each other about what the possibility might look like.

As a planner, you can look at the lay of the land and where it would make sense to develop housing. The Hinsdale dynamic is: You've got a brand new bridge with a sidewalk going across it. You've got an existing bridge and island complex that'd make a fantastic pedestrian park. Then you've got the old railroad bridge, so you've got three bridges going across. wastewater plant on almost immediate proximity across the river in Brattleboro.

And if we start talking about how this would make sense even just from a basic objective planning — without the politics — to start, you know, What might that look like? Where might we be able to better accommodate large quantities of housing? And what would it take to support that? And how could it benefit both sides?

To my mind, it'd be a similar conversation up in Rockingham and Walpole. I think it's just starting to have the conversation before deciding anything — just like: What are the possibilities?

That's the general idea. I don't know if it'd work or not. And, of course, at the district level, it's just a concept. We make no decisions.

**BALINT:** Well, the thing is, as we know, we are limited in places like Brattleboro in terms of where there's buildable land remaining. And certainly, we haven't even talked about what happened this summer with all the flooding, and how we know our low-lying areas are going to continue to flood.

I certainly have seen all of the work that's going down along Williams Street to try to prevent flooding. But we do need to think more broadly. I should be in touch with our New Hampshire House members, too, and talk to them about what could be included in a bill like this one to make it easier for multi-state partnerships.

**MARCEL:** What are the possibilities for securing funding for people with old homes and low incomes to make these houses more resilient to climate change? Not necessarily to provide more housing — though that's possible, too — but just to be able to stay in our homes?

**BALINT:** We know that part of the challenge in these older homes in Vermont is that we need to be able to do rehab and refurbishing to be able to stay in the homes, and I know for some older Vermonters who would like to be on one level. There aren't a lot of houses right now available on one level, so you're trying to make it work within the home that you've got.

And so this bill provides grants for nonprofit developers to work with authorities to rehab old housing stock for affordable units. It's not directly referenced in my bill, but I do support more work to weatherize.

There are other bills moving through Congress that are specifically geared at weatherizing. I know that's a really important aspect of this. And I know State Sen. Wendy Harrison has had a rehab program through the state as well, I don't know if that's still being funded. I think it would be helpful to know those provide direct assistance to be able to do that rehabbing.

**WENDY HARRISON,** *state senator, Windham County:* Yes, that program is still in effect — the Vermont Housing Improvement Program. It's on pause now because we're [updating it]. The amount per unit will be expanded and what folks can use the money for will also be expanded. It should be ready to go in the next couple of weeks. So thanks for everyone's patience.

The program provides grants between \$30,000 and \$50,000 to private homeowners for the purpose of bringing apartment units up to code, primarily, and then there are some incentives to rent to folks getting out of incarceration and those kinds of things. But it's a really effective program and in terms of cost, when the state gave us an update on the price, we were getting updated units with an average cost of \$36,000 per unit, which is 1/10 of the cost to the public sector when we do other types of housing. So it's a really important part of the puzzle.

We won't get everywhere with this because it's one unit at a time, but it does preserve the character of the community, too, especially when it's used in the historic downtowns.

**MARCEL:** The next question is: "How would this legislation help the Winston Prouty mixed-income and mixed-use neighborhood proposed for Brattleboro, or other housing production that meets the needs of moderate- to middle-income households?"

**BALINT:** A real thrust of this is to make sure we keep people in their homes, and we want to make the Emergency Rental Assistance Program permanent. We know that it's much more difficult once people lose their housing to get them rehoused, and it's horrible for the emotional life of that person and their family. What we want is direct assistance to people to be able to stay housed.

And so what I'm hearing from that previous question is, there may be also an aspect of this that's about individual homeowners who are elderly and cannot move to a one-level house. Yeah, Joyce, I'm looking at you, kid!

Is there an opportunity to have some other part of the building...

**MARCEL:** ... Yes! Elevators. Just bring elevators. (You could call it the Joyce Marcel Amendment.)

BALINT: We're going to continue to try to find whatever sup-

land developed to build more housing.

Around the state, everywhere I go, people say we need more housing, and almost in the same breath they say, "Yeah, but I don't want it here."

I'm wondering how that may be showing up in Windham County and how that impacts this conversation.

**MARCEL:** Well, that's the NIMBY problem.

BALINT: And I'm wondering if it's shifting.

**CHRIS CAMPANY**, *Windham Regional Commission:* I don't think so. In the conversations I have with individuals and in meetings with towns and others, you'll hear the same: the cry for the need for housing, but "we don't know who will move in there if we build this housing, and it might be people that are going to bring problems with them that we don't have."

And this is not unique to Vermont. I've experienced it in every state and every jurisdiction where I've worked, and there's so much fear over change and over not knowing who might move in that people will sabotage the availability of homes for themselves, for their children, for their parents, for their neighbors.

I'm not 100% sure how you get over that. Even as acute as the need is now — and I'm hearing a lot more conversation about, or just the sheer recognition about, the need for housing — I'm not necessarily seeing the aggressive action that needs to be taken, especially at the municipal level, to make it possible.

One of the exceptions, though, is Brattleboro, which probably has been one of the best municipalities in the state as far as trying to get their rules and regs up to date, really looking at the infrastructure issues, really kind of leaning forward and thinking ahead. There's actually a great model there.

But one of the unique things about Brattleboro, of course, is they actually have a dedicated professional planning staff to work on this stuff all the time.

**BALINT:** Yes, and we know that that is an issue, obviously, for smaller towns, if they don't have a dedicated staff for that.

We have to make this connection for people that if you want to have a thriving downtown, you need people to be able to work and to live there.

Because it's funny: Whenever I go out with my kids and we try to grab food downtown, they ask, "Why is it taking so long?" I tell them, "Because everybody has a workforce crisis. And they're working as hard as they can."

Just adding more housing to the housing market helps at all levels. And the bill does also support mixed-income developments. That is one of the things that they're trying to do at Winston Prouty as well.

**MARCEL:** This is from Deborah Luskin: "Does the housing bill include any provision for transportation that does not rely on private cars?"

**BALINT:** It doesn't, but we know that this is a real need. One of the things that we constantly come up against in trying to do any kind of work in rural America is looking at transportation.

It's not specifically around transportation in this bill, but it is about changing the way we think about parking minimums. As it relates to housing, we know that that has been a barrier.

And so we are thinking about using space in a different way when it comes to cars, because that can prevent more housing from being built.

**MARCEL:** Christine Hart notes that the number of those over the age of 70 in Windham County is projected to more than double [to] over 4,000 people between 2020 and 2040.

**BALINT:** I've been very concerned about the issue of seniors needing other housing that works for them. They want to get rid of their big, rambling house that is drafty, and they're spending so much money on the heat, but there's literally nowhere to make that lateral move.

**MARCEL:** We have the Rich Earth Institute people saying, in response to the wastewater question, "In case people don't know, they work on reclaiming urine and using it for fertilizer. They've had very great success with that on farms here."

"Our region has the good fortune to have additional expertise about the most promising innovations in wastewater. Rich Earth Institute and BrightWater Tools work locally, but also nationally and internationally.

"Our technologies are going to Europe first because they are ahead of the U.S., but Vermont housing could be facilitated by one of the solutions that we're aware of. For some of those solutions, we represent the technologies being developed in other places."

**BALINT:** And it is diverting that out of the waste stream as well. As we think about housing in the future, you're right — that needs to be a component

#### BALINT: Right.

**CAMPANY:** The railroad bridge possibly might be able to carry wastewater. I think the new bridge could, too. But you've got the





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port that we can for that particular project. We're focused on this most specifically on the issue of affordable and deeply affordable housing, because we know that the housing market is the whole market. And when you increase units in any part of the market, it helps everybody within the market.

I've seen the plans for Prouty — it's very exciting. And we're going to stay in close contact to see if there's a way that we can help.

**MARCEL:** OK. Now we're going on back to old homes. "What are the possibilities for securing funding for people with old homes and low incomes to make these houses more resilient to climate change? Not necessarily to provide more housing, though that's possible, too, but just to be able to stay in our homes?"

**BALINT:** There isn't anything specifically in here related to climate adaptation, though that's incredibly important.

I do know that dealing with climate change and weatherization will be dealt with more in some of the bills that my colleagues are introducing. We were really focused on low [income] and deeply affordable housing because we know that there's an incredible need.

But I'm hearing from this gathering tonight how many people are in homes that really aren't meeting their needs. And certainly I think about my own house: We did a whole lot of work re-insulating the house because we felt like all the heat was just going right out of all the poor seals on the windows. Most of Vermont is like this — we have a lot of old housing stock. I'm seeing a need for another program specifically geared toward that.

**MARCEL:** We also are in the middle of climate change as well. The effects are not as drastic as in California, and we're not on fire. But we have a lot of water damage, a lot of trees and power lines falling down, a lot of power lost. Climate change is affecting Vermont.

**BALINT:** Oh, absolutely. I've met a number of people who are moving to Vermont because they're trying to escape the wildfires. It's not coming. It's already here.

**MARCEL:** And a lot of people are moving here because we have water and they have drought. But we may have too much water in a couple of years. And we're all learning how to deal with this.

OK, here's a good question: "Please talk about the problems caused by the need for housing, the labor required to produce the housing, and the need for education to build and renovate housing to meet energy standards."

And I'll add on to that the fact that finding a plumber, finding a carpenter, finding somebody to do work on your house is incredibly difficult right now.

**BALINT:** I talk to employers in every industry, across the state, saying that they're short labor but they can't bring people in because there isn't housing available. And so I completely understand — it's very difficult to get a plumber or an electrician, absolutely.

And yet, these are really great jobs, and we need to be training young people who are interested in them.

But you're right. It's completely connected. The housing stock isn't there.

I was just talking with an employer up in Chittenden County. They did a final set of interviews with somebody who was very excited to move here to work on a very exciting technology project, and there was no housing so they decided to go elsewhere.

It's high end, it is service workers, it's across the spectrum.

**MARCEL:** Margaret says, "Families whose incomes are above the many low-income programs needs to be addressed. Joyce mentioned the boomers — there are many of us with houses that could sell in a matter of days. But where would we go?

"Some communities of tiny homes for seniors with public transportation nearby is needed. If you want rural areas to increase housing, water and sewer for many towns are needed."

**BALINT:** One of the struggles that we've had in Vermont for years is that when it comes right down to it, people don't want more

to be a component.

**MARCEL:** Next question: "I am concerned about how much of the money in the act may be targeted towards helping people pay landlords, instead of helping our in-demand workforce to build equity."

**BALINT:** The Rental Assistance Program is an investment — again, remember, it's \$3 billion in federal dollars over five years. You look at the amount of investments that we're putting into the housing trust fund, the capital management fund, and home investment partnership, we're talking about nearly \$500 billion.

I understand there's this tension between, you know, wanting to have a direct assistance program for people to be able to stay housed — that's critically important. We have a homeless problem.

We know that people get better health outcomes when they have a roof over their head. So it was important for us to have an aspect of this that is about giving people an opportunity when they're in dire straits to stay in houses. That's a better option.

But the bulk of the bill is actually investments in this sharedequity model, so people can build up equity. I think it's really important that we're thinking about people having, over time, the opportunity to build wealth and not just to be paying rent. I understand. So it is a big part of the bill.

**MARCEL:** This is from Meg Mott: "Could it be that your bill might get Republican support? There are Republicans in Congress who have expressed concern for affordable housing in rural areas."

**BALINT:** Yes. And actually, I'm so glad you mentioned that. I do a lot of bipartisan work. One of the caucuses that I'm part of is the Bipartisan Rural Health Caucus.

I do think there is a lot of opportunity. And I was talking with the ranking member on the committee that specifically deals with housing and some of the other longtime members of that committee, and they said that, yes, that this is something that cuts across every congressional district and there is an opportunity.

I'll just be honest: I think the opportunity is going to come when we flip the House, because what we saw when Biden had the House of Representatives, we were able to make an infrastructure bill that offered billions of dollars of investments. I think we need to do a similar thing for housing, and I think we will bring some Republicans along.

**MARCEL:** Okay, one more question: "Do all these bills take Vermont residency into consideration? I am concerned about the LLCs and out-of-state or county entities that are buying up properties and investments to provide short-term rentals for tourists rather than using these homes and properties for Vermont residents and families."

**BALINT:** Remember, a lot of this is going to organizations in the state and state government that understand where their money needs to go. This is not going to be used to fund conglomerates coming in to buy up housing. We have a part of the bill that is dealing specifically with price fixing in this situation, with multinationals buying housing.

So we are also doing something that you'll be interested in — a study on the practicality and the economic effects of taxing specifically second homes, and having a federal fund that is fed into for creating more housing for others by taxing second homes.

So that is a part that I know a lot of homeowners are excited about. It may not be a part that my Republican colleagues are excited about. But we're always looking for an opportunity to have a fixed funding stream. And I think there's a case to be made that if somebody has two homes, perhaps they should be paying into a fund to help others have one. Just saying.

**MARCEL:** That's a quote you could embroider on a pillow. **BALINT:** Yes.

#### VOICES

## What's standing in the way of building more homes?

Chris Campany, Christine Hart, Sue Fillion, Craig Miskovich, and Jason Van Nest illuminate the challenges of increasing housing capacity in Vermont

**CAMPANY:** So just from where I sit, Windham Regional Commission serves 27 towns in southeast Vermont. It's the 23 towns in Windham County; Readsboro, Searsburg, and Winhall in Bennington County; and Weston in Windsor County. We assist towns and affected local governments [...] and collaborate with them on regional issues.

And I've worked in a number of other states, including Orange County in New York, in the wake of 9/11; Carver County, Maryland; Mississippi; and Louisiana. I've also worked for the federal government in D.C.

One of the challenges we have in not only Vermont but New England is these really small geographies, these tiny towns — by any measure, they're pretty small, even Brattleboro, our biggest. In our region, Brattleboro is the largest town, with a population of around 12,000, and our smallest [unincorporated] town is Somerset, with a population of six.

Towns really have to make a lot of major planned land use decisions, including whether or not to have a town plan, whether or not to have zoning, and whether or not to do things like investment in new infrastructure or the infrastructure they've already got.

And this requires a lot of political and operational capacity that a lot of these towns don't really have a strong tradition of doing. There's nothing wrong with that — it's not that they've done anything wrong, it's that a lot of them have focused on roads and those kinds of decisions, not necessarily [things like] develop[ing] housing.

And it's also really difficult to plan for housing in these small geographies when it may actually make more sense, because of the size of a neighboring village or something else, to actually have more housing in the town next to you, as opposed to your town — just because of topography, infrastructure, existing built environment, whatever the nature of their village might be.

So, and just to be clear, there's over 500 units needed right now. Londonderry did a housing study that said they need more than 300 units right now. We're talking several hundred units just in this region alone. And so we really need to talk about housing at a substantial scale that creates efficiencies that drive down cost and can actually achieves the housing numbers that we need.

And the availability of public wastewater and water systems is a primary factor in determining where housing can be built at a volume that's needed.

This map shows village centers and downtowns. Where we have no community water and sewer, it's red. Yellow is where you have sewer only; blue, where you have water only; and green, where you have water and sewer.

And to really achieve the scale and the sizable number of housing units that we need, it's really only where those green dots exist. If you just have wastewater, that can help, but you're going to really need a community water system, too.

So in southeast Vermont, we're really talking Readsboro, Wilmington, Brattleboro, West Brattleboro, Algiers Village, Putney, Bellows Falls, and Saxtons River.

In the West River Valley Route 30 corridor and the Route 100 corridor, you have amazing village centers that are often really walkable, bike-able, desirable places to live. But it's really hard to add many dwelling units, if any, to those villages at all.

Our other challenge as a state is that, because a lot of money is of federal origin, there's this kind of perverse system where we make towns compete for these funds. So first, towns have to have the ability to compete, and they have to have the ability to administer the grants to do wastewater and water systems planning.

It'd be a lot better if as a state, we just have the engineering and design function ready to go to just do it as opposed to towns having to compete for a series of grants to have that done. I think it'd make

make improvements, then they're not going to make them. We're working hard on developing a vision in 2040 and really getting good hard data about what we need to prepare Windham County for this. We are and will be the second-oldest county in the second-oldest state in the country.

**SUE FILLION,** *Brattleboro Planning Department:* I think sometimes in our department we're not necessarily getting the word out enough about some of the changes that we've made to try to encourage housing development.

We had this experience after Tropical Storm Irene, working with Brattleboro Housing Partnerships trying to find a site to relocate the housing from Melrose Terrace. We were finding that our zoning regulations were presenting a lot of barriers.

Things lined up in various ways. But when Covid started, and there was a heightened need for housing, we started looking at getting rid of our density standards in zoning districts that have water and sewer.

What that means is a little technical. You might have had one unit per 6,000 square feet. So if you had a 7,000 square foot lot, you could only have one unit and you weren't going to get a second unit out of that.

We realized that we had all these artificial regulations that were holding things back when really what most people were concerned about was the form of the housing, so whether it had two units in it, four units — it didn't really matter to them, as long as the kind of the pattern of development was the same for the neighborhood.

So as emergency interim zoning, during the Covid emergency, the Selectboard actually got rid of that. The sky didn't fall.

We were also able to take advantage of a bylaw modernization grant from the state of Vermont. They still have those grants available annually, to really take a deeper dive into our zoning regulations and figure out where were the bad barriers to housing development.

We did some some different things and were ahead of some of the state statute changes that were making it easier as well.

We now treat one unit to five units as a permitted use, so we're reducing regulatory review, making it a little bit more certain for developers — particularly in this case, probably small-scale developers, the kind of people wanting to build extra units in the neighborhood or something like that.

But at the same time, we realized that we were rejecting a lot of things that people should be living with. If it was a big apartment block, you know, everyone had to have their private space, whether it was a deck or a patio. We realized that those are niceties. They're not necessarily necessities when we have so many people who need to be housed, and they bring additional costs to a project. So we removed a lot of those requirements.

And then we also had a new missing middle housing overlay district, where you could have up to nine units. This was really trying to promote a certain type of housing, whether it was garden apartments, townhomes, things that we weren't really seeing a lot of development on — five units in a house on High Street or something like that. We wanted to make it really easy to do that.

Our new zoning regulations were passed by the Selectboard last summer, and we actually had our first application for a missing middle housing project, which is nine townhomes. We actually think they're going to do an additional three.

We've been advocating for Act 250 reform, and we're pleased to see some of what's coming out of the Legislature. We think that in areas like downtown Brattleboro there's a lot of redundant review. So we're really supportive of trying to find pathways to make Act 250 easier for developers.

And we're taking advantage of the different state designation programs — village center, downtown (which Brattleboro has), and the neighborhood designation area. We worked to expand that to include the Winston Prouty campus, and also around West Brattleboro Village so that, you know, certain development projects can have some of the benefits that come with those projects. So that's been really good.

And then as a community, there's a real acknowledgement that housing is a big problem. We had done a housing action plan in 2021, and that identified a conservative need for 517 housing units — half rental, half single-family — and the demand could easily rise to 700.

And so with discussions about the American Rescue Plan Act funds that the town of Brattleboro received, there was a lot of community support towards putting some of it toward housing. The Selectboard is thinking of actually not using the ARPA funding, but we have another source of funding, dedicating some funds to that.

And we're doing some work to identify town-owned lands and do some pre-development planning so that we can make those available to developers and reduce their up-front planning costs.

So there's more that we can do. We're interested in looking into parking reform, how can we get more housing on Putney Road, and doing more outreach with property owners. But we're pretty excited with what we're doing so far. **MARCEL:** Jason, do you want to tell us a little bit about modular housing?

**JASON VAN NEST**, architect, professor, and entrepreneur: I'm joining you from downtown, on Main Street in Brattleboro, Logic Building Systems. And we are laser-focused on driving down the cost of building affordable housing. We wholeheartedly agree with assessments like Craig's and Sue's that it's great that Becca's bill [envisions] huge investments to increase the supply of housing, but let's make those dollars go as absolutely fast and absolutely as efficiently as possible.

When you look around at our colleagues around the globe and you ask who's not in a housing crisis right now, two population centers — one in northern Europe and one in Southeast Asia — really stand out.

And what they've done over the last 50 years is they've adopted off-site construction practices. They're building literally modular components of housing in off-site factories, things like bathrooms and kitchens, and they're very efficiently transporting them to job sites to plug in.

I join you as a tenured professor at New York Institute of Technology, where I run the Center for Offsite Construction. And we are promoting and even drafting the first standards for how modular kitchens and bathrooms would plug into a host building.

If you think about how USB plugs standardized how we put thumb drives, hard drives, printers, and whatever else into our computers, we can do the same thing for how we we build housing, especially low-income housing and affordable housing, in America.

The second thing we're doing right here in the laboratory is perfecting the first modules that will conform to those standards. So we're creating essentially a kitchen in a box, a utility room in a box, and a bedroom in a box that act more like an appliance that you would plug in — say, the same way as a dishwasher — into new and affordable apartments, condos, and multifamily housing.

And so all are welcome to drop by and take a look at the prototyping we're doing here, but we're really trying to learn lessons about how to increase the supply of housing and to minimize the amount of onsite labor, which is the most expensive labor almost in our entire industrialized ecosystem here in America.

By pushing connections into a controlled environment and minimizing the number of connections that we make on job sites, we get more efficient; we also get more green, driving 30% of waste out of dumpsters on job sites, and driving 40 to 60% less carbon dioxide to produce the same kitchens and bathrooms.

**LYNN BARRETT**, Vermont Independent Media (forum host): In Maine, they are building a number of modular homes, for homeless and low-income folks. Jason, it's something to do with cement, correct?

**VAN NEST:** I don't know this particular project with specificity, but I do know that there's about three different ways that we're trying to introduce industrialized processes.

3-D printing homes essentially takes a lot of the human labor, weather conditions, and whatnot out of the job site. You can set up a 3-D printer to extrude thin layers of concrete. And you just need one or two laborers to put in formwork for the windows and doors. This is a major piece of making both sustainable housing, because you can make nice, thick walls with lots of insulation in this way, but also, you can set that printer to go 48, 72 hours, and realize a whole series of homes very efficiently.

It's a piece of the puzzle, with other pieces of the production puzzle like Logic Building Systems dropping in modular kitchens, bathrooms, and utility rooms to 3-D printed site work like this. We really are all together driving down the cost of affordable housing. And that's really the thread that's been tying together so many of the questions we've seen today.

It's not that we need to drive more money to drive up the supply of housing, but we have to get better at how we make housing. The way we make housing has essentially not been updated in 100 years. And if you think about the history of the automotive industry, it's had two revolutions in those 100 years. So we're really just updating a 100-year-old means of production.

**MISKOVICH:** I am the president of the Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation. We believe that housing is economic development and that we need to dedicate our focus and our resources toward adding to our housing stock in Windham County and in the communities that we serve. And we believe that if we build it, they will come — and actually, that they're probably already here.

We see that in kind of substandard housing doubling up and other accommodations for the lack of housing in the community right now. So I think there is there is some labor that's in Brattleboro, and we need to find housing for those folks.

it a lot easier.

So one of the things I'd like to talk to Becca about: Is there a way to make the EPA and other federal grant funds that ultimately come to the state easier for towns to use.

Some of our towns — like Londonderry, Jamaica, Grafton have really led on the EPA wastewater grants and have found that these new wastewater systems can support only what's already there. They can't support actual smart growth, like, how do you grow new housing units in, like, more of a neighborhood setting and preferably, ideally, out of harm's way for flooding? And how do you actually increase the number of units in the community? And then, in cases where it makes sense, having more cross-border conversations — not only interstate but also inter-municipal conversations.

We're working with UMass Amherst and the Architects Foundation's Communities by Design program to work with four towns up in the northwest corner of our region — Winhall, Londonderry, Jamaica, and Weston — to see what it would be like to have four towns collaborate on housing planning. If that model works, then we'll replicate it elsewhere, among groups of towns within the region.

**MARCEL:** Chris Hart, do you want to talk a little about maybe the aging and housing?

**CHRISTINE HART**, *Windham Aging:* We're a community collaborative of people — about 20 of us who meet monthly — and we're focused on not just housing, but all of the issues of aging, transportation, all the things that people have brought up.

A lot of these questions really are right in the wheelhouse of Windham Aging. So I would encourage everybody to go to our website (windhamaging.com) and see what we're working on. It's very exciting, and it's really needed work. As I said, we're looking at this huge wave of elderly folks coming.

**MARCEL:** We're not coming — we're here.

**HART:** Well, we're here, but where are we going to put all these people?

One of the big areas of Windham Aging is on health and how healthy aging, health outcomes. And you can't do that if you don't have decent housing.

One of the things that we"re advocating for in Windham County are more facility beds — residential care, assisted living, nursing home, every level of facility. We've lost a lot of them in Windham County. And when people, when my friends, need that level of assistance, they have to leave town, they have to go to New Hampshire.

And so while the state isn't really excited about that and really is moving away from that housing, we are really advocating for it. And we're going to do more work to develop some pretty hard numbers around just how much of that we need.

But we're going out and doing listening sessions throughout Windham County right now. They're fascinating. We did one at Valley Cares, and they're saying, "If they're full, where do I go? I live in Townshend and I don't want to leave my friends."

So it's going to be a pretty dire need. And we are mindful that when the elderly move, there's a waterfall. So, if I'm elderly, I leave my house. My house hopefully can go to somebody who's younger, and that starts a whole movement in our housing stock. We need to have that movement, and right now, people are not leaving their houses.

I had a great discussion with Elizabeth Bridgewater of Windham & Windsor Housing Trust over their rehab work, and she said that one of the barriers is certainly the trades and those issues that were brought up.

But an even bigger barrier is the psychological, mental, and emotional issues that go with having to move. You can't dismiss it. It's very real. And if we don't have supports and services for seniors, both as they age in place, but also when they want to move or just **CRAIG MISKOVICH**, *attorney and developer*: I will be pithy and maybe provocative: What housing crisis?

We had about 600,000 people in Vermont in 2007. And 15 years later, we had about 600,000 people. We have a very small increase as a percentage in our number of Vermonters. And our housing stock has grown at a similar, albeit small ,percentage.

So why does it feel like our housing crisis is so acute?

The answer is because we have a *workforce* housing crisis. Fewer Vermonters are in the workforce now than were immediately prior to Covid. There's a couple reasons for that — primarily, that the folks who left the workforce were the older Vermonters that we talked about: the seniors, the boomers.

And contrary to public opinion, Vermonters tend to stay in Vermont and stay in those houses. And those houses don't produce labor anymore.

For the entire state, we went from the highest workforce participation rate in the country, just prior to Covid, to significantly under the median value.

So we have a workforce housing problem, and I would advocate that that's where we should focus our efforts — that we should find ways to build workforce housing.

And, as Chris said, What does workforce housing look like?

Well, when I was 22 years old, I lived in an apartment building. It was cheap, it was efficient, and it was it was built at scale.

So if we Vermonters want to have people to work in our places and have businesses to tax to generate our revenue, we're going to have to build the housing for the people who are going to work in Vermont, which means our population is going to grow because we're going to import labor. We're going to have to have places for those people to live.

And that is antithetical to a whole bunch of Vermonters' idea of what Vermont is — that we just need to stop getting bigger, we need to stop building houses, and we need to be exactly what we are.

The problem is, we just got old, and we either need to move old people out of Vermont [Marcel laughs], or we need to build housing for new people. That's it.

**MARCEL:** You can move me anywhere you want. (Oh, boy, we have to really unpack that one.)

**FILLION:** We need housing. We do need all types of housing. I will say that. Low-income or affordable, very affordable housing, middle-income housing. We need it all.

**MISKOVICH:** Yeah, all housing is homeless housing. All housing is is workforce housing. All housing is reducing the stress on the system. Right?

Senior housing is fantastic. As Chris said, you build senior housing, you move folks out of big old five-bedroom houses in Brattleboro into one-bedroom senior housing apartments. With one apartment you've created five new bedrooms. There is, of course, some international immigration that could fill in some of the housing or the workforce demand that we have.

And there's also domestic in-migration, especially from regions of New England that are more densely populated than Brattleboro, Windham County, and that have surplus labor, then folks could move up. And that would be great, right? Like having new young folks move into the community to provide that labor and start their careers and their lives would be fantastic.

That's how I arrived in Brattleboro, now 20-some years ago, and I hope that we can continue to open up that door and be welcoming to folks because we need more people in Vermont. Maybe that's the part that's upsetting to some.

**CAMPANY:** Craig is right. I think there are a number of younger workers here who are doubled up in apartments, renting rooms in homes, but you know, we gotta move faster because as appealing and lovely as Brattleboro and Vermont is, you're only going to rent a room in a house for so long, in your late 20s, early 30s, before you say, "I probably need to do something different."

And that's where we really need to talk not only about new people, but just retaining the people we have in appropriate housing for where they are in their life stage.

I'm afraid that as we look at the census, going forward, we're going to see more people departing Vermont because of the lack of not only affordable housing, but also just housing that's appropriate for their age.

And that's going to be older Vermonters, too; it's going to be people who can afford to make that move.

**BARRETT:** David Neumeister comments: "The number of young workers below 40 in Vermont is going down every year and will continue to decrease for the next 20 years at least. We need the BDCC and others supporting an immigrant push with housing for them." Agree.

**VAN NEST:** That follows national averages. The construction industry is in a labor crunch, and we are essentially reaping the rewards of sending a majority of our young people over the last 30 or 40 years into white collar jobs and undergraduate degrees and away from the trades.

It's wonderful that Brattleboro specifically has a trade school, the Windham Regional Career Center, attached to its high school and we ended up, unfortunately, in Vermont training some of New York City's and Boston's best electricians, plumbers, and other tradespeople. They just find incredible opportunities in urban centers.

And so not only is David right, that we face a long-term, durable trend — fewer tradespeople serving our aging housing here in Vermont — but it creates a critical need to update the way that we realize and build housing with less labor.

It's basic high school economics. When prices go up, it's because demand goes up. The supplies going down is really what's driving a lot of what we find in Becca's legislation.

And the response is up to us as a community.

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# Bears win Unified basketball home opener

Can't recall ever seeing a coach wearing the colors of their team's opponent, but Brattleboro Unified basketball coach Tyler Boone likes to do things a little differently.

Twin Valley is offering Unified basketball for the first time this year. The Wildcats played their debut game at home against the Burr & Burton Bulldogs on April 1, and on April 5, played their first road game against the Bears at the BUHS gym.

Boone wanted to make the Wildcats feel welcome, which explains why they were wearing a Twin Valley hoodie on the sideline during the game and introduced each of the Twin Valley players and coaches to the fans during halftime. It was yet another example of the excellent sportsmanship that is a big part of the Unified sports experience.

"It was awesome," said Twin Valley co-coach Andy Oyer. "It was a nice touch."

Being neighborly has its limits, however, and the Bears made sure they took care of business and held on for a 38-36 victory.

Twin Valley was coming off a 52-20 loss to the Bulldogs, who were last season's state runnersup, while Brattleboro won its April 1 opener at Springfield, 55-44.

Boone tried something different for the Twin Valley game and started ninth-graders Alexx LaBounty and Caden Russell. "They really impressed me," Boone said. "They'll be a big help for us this season."

But it was the returning players for the Bears, such as speedy guard Austin Pinette and burly forward Jeffery White, who helped carry the load against the Wildcats. Pinette was the high scorer with 12 points, while White scored four points and pulled down several rebounds.

The Bears led the game all the way. A three-pointer by Tyler Bolduc, a pair of layins by Pinette, and baskets by Ashley Cleveland and Labounty, gave Brattleboro an 11-4 lead after one quarter. Twin Valley responded in the second quarter with a pair of baskets from Thomas Richard, with Nathaniel Hernandez, Brogan Boyce, and John-Michael Richard also chipping in on offense to cut the Bears' lead down to 18-16 at halftime. A three-pointer from Bolduc, and baskets from White and LaBounty accounted for all of the Bears' offense. Brattleboro pulled away in the third quarter as Pinnette, Russell, White, and Cleveland contributed to a 14-6 run that gave the Bears a 32-22 lead. But once again, the Wildcats rallied back as Thomas Richard and Trevor Morris-Boyd each had a pair of baskets, and Chloe Lashway added another during a 10-4 run that cut the Bears' lead to 36-32 with 1:37 to play in the final quarter. Brady Lackey and Pinette then traded baskets to maintain the Bears' four-point lead. John-Michael Richard scored with six seconds left to get the Wildcats within two, but they ran out of time and the Bears hung on for the win. It was an unexpectedly exciting game, and the two teams will meet again on April 11 in Whitingham.

RANDOLPH t. HOLHUT, deputy editor of this newspaper, has written this column since 2010 and has covered sports in Windham County since the 1980s. Readers can

send him sports information

at news@commonsnews.

options for local youths.

org.

• Youth basketball camp for those entering grades 1-8 will run from June 24-28. Grades 1-4 will meet from 9 a.m. to noon and grades 5-8 will meet from 1 to 4 p.m. Both sections have a maximum capacity of 20 kids.

This camp will take place at the Gibson-Aiken Center and will be run by Jason Coplan. The fee for this camp is \$130 for Brattleboro residents and \$145 for nonresidents. Participants will take part in skills and drills that will help increase the level of play and understanding of the game. Players will take part in various forms of competition, but no player will be forced to participate if they do not feel comfortable. Campers should bring sneakers and a water bottle

• A track & field program for youths between age 6 and 14 will be offered from June 25 through July 20 on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays, from 6 to 7 p.m., at the Brattleboro Union High School track complex. The fee is \$35 for Brattleboro residents and \$50 for non-Brattleboro residents.

Participants will do dashes, sprints, middle- and long-distance running, and relays, as well as long jump, shot put, discus, hurdles, and softball toss. Participants should wear comfortable shoes and bring a water bottle.

• Baseball camp will be offered this summer at Living a.m. to noon. The fee is \$130 for Brattleboro residents and \$145 for nonresidents.

At this camp, participants will be trained in the fundamentals of baseball. Each camper will receive personal attention to help improve their skills through the use of proper playing habits. Experienced coaches will use their knowledge to help players take the next step in their baseball development. All participants must come with a glove, cleats or sneakers, and a bat (if you own one).

• Softball camp will take place at Living Memorial Park on the Lower Softball/Baseball Field. This camp is for those in grades 3-8 and will run from 9 a.m. to noon on July 8-12. The fee is \$130 for Brattleboro residents and \$145 for nonresidents.

With a focus on fundamentals, this softball camp will help participants develop good habits and proper technique. Instructors Jay Cudworth and Erin Cooke will help increase knowledge of the game, and build confidence at the plate. All participants are required to come with glove, cleats or sneakers, a bat (if you own one), a water bottle, and a snack for a morning break.

• Gymnastics camp will be held at the Gibson-Aiken Center for those 5-14 years old. Camp weeks will be held as follows: Week 1: June 24-28, Week 2: July 1-5 (no class on July 4), Week 3: July 8-12, Week 4: July 15-19, Week 5: July 22-26th, Week 6: July 29-Aug. 2, and Week 7: Aug. 5-9. The fee for Week 1

The fee for Week 1 and Weeks 3-7 is \$115 for Brattleboro residents and \$130 for non-residents. The fee for Week 2 is \$92 for Brattleboro residents and \$107 for nonresidents. Camp runs from 9 a.m. (sharp) to noon, Monday -Friday. Participants should bring a nutritious snack, and a water bottle, and wear tightfitting clothes. The instructors are Amanda Montgomery and



Brattleboro's Jamieson Crochetiere (16) celebrates after scoring a basket against Twin Valley in the second half of their Unified basketball game on April 5 at the BUHS gym.

from 9 a.m. to noon, at Living Memorial Park's Perseverance Skate Park.

The fee is \$175 for Brattleboro residents and \$190 for non-Brattleboro residents. Participants should bring sneakers, skateboards, a helmet, elbow and knee pads, a snack, and water bottle. Equipment is not provided.

 National Senior Games Champion Gurudharm Khalsa will lead a Pickleball camp for those in grades 5-12 at the Living Memorial Park Tennis Courts. Camp for grades 5-8 will be held July 15-19, from 4 to 5:30 p.m. Camp for grades 9-12 will be held July 22 26, from 4 to 5:30 p.m. The fee for this camp is \$50 for Brattleboro residents and \$65 for non-residents. Participants will learn the basic fundamentals of the game, including the underhand serve, the drive, the dink, and the volley. Campers will work their way to learn the basic rules of the game for doubles play, and some elements of strategy. Warmups, stretching, agility, and mobility drills will be included. Bring a pickleball paddle if you have one and a water bottle. Individuals can register online at vtbrattleboroweb. myvscloud.com/webtrac/web, and click on "Summer Camps and Programs," or in person at the Gibson-Aiken Center on Main Street. For all programs, events, facility information, and more, visit Brattleboro. gov. Once you are on this page, hover over the "Departments" tab found on the blue horizontal bar. A new drop-down menu will appear and click "Recreation and Parks." If there are special accommodations required for these programs, let the Rec. Dept. know at least five days in advance. For more information, call the Gibson-Aiken Office at 802-254-5808.

mountains and trails. The Green Mountain Club (GMC) reminds hikers that high-elevation trails on state land are now closed through May.

The GMC noted in a news release that the start of mud season for the trails has historically been April 15, but it's been trending earlier in recent years. "This year, with such a mild

winter, we saw mud seasonequivalent conditions in every month of meteorological winter. And with sustained above-freezing temperatures throughout March, a messy mud season is here to stay. Even 20 inches of snow on the mountains in mid-March fell upon muddy, thawed ground, so mud season conditions are quick to return," according to the GMC. Hiking on muddy trails makes them more susceptible to erosion, and hiking around muddy sections widens the trail and tramples trailside vegetation. The GMC advises hikers to seek out low elevation trails and durable surfaces during mud season. Dirt roads and rail trails statewide make for great long walks. They also advise hikers to stay flexible and adaptable. Muddy conditions can exist any month of the year, so if you encounter significant mud on your way to a trailhead or summit, consider turning around and finding an alternative place to hike. If you do continue, hike directly through mud to protect the land around the trail. Wear waterproof boots, gaiters, and use hiking poles to improve stability. You can check recent trail reports on forums such as Hiking in Vermont (facebook.com/ groups/greenmountainclub), or post an honest trip report of your own to help other hikers and spread responsible trail stewardship. Visit greenmountainclub.org for more information.

the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department says anglers can still have fun and be successful early in the season if they keep a few strategies in mind.

"Just like any other time of year, anglers fishing early in the spring should adjust their tactics based on conditions," State Fisheries Biologist Shawn Good said in a news release. "Trout will become more active with warmer water temperatures. If you can find a good location and

#### Rec. Dept. announces summer camp schedules

It's not too soon to be thinking about summer sports camps, and the Brattleboro Recreation & Parks Department will be offering a variety of Memorial Park on the Lower Softball/Baseball Field.

Session one, for grades 1-3, will run from July 15-19. Session Two, for those grades 4-6, will run from July 22-26. Both sessions will run from 9 Karen Gallivan.

• The Recreation & Parks Department and the New England Skateboarding Association will offer a skateboarding camp for those 8-12 years old from July 15-19,



RANDOLPH T. HOLHUT/THE COMMONS

Brattleboro's Caden Russell (6) chases down a loose ball as Twin Valley's Nathaniel Hernandez (12) looks on during the first half of their Unified basketball game on April 5 in the BUHS gym.

#### Watch your step on the trails

• Despite two recent major snowstorms, mud season conditions remain on Vermont's

#### Vermont's trout season opens April 13

• Vermont's trout fishing season opens Saturday, April 13, and, despite lingering snow cover in many areas, present your bait or lure without spooking the trout, you'll have a good chance of catching a few fish, and enjoy a nice day outside."

Good says finding a smallto medium-low-elevation river or stream that is not too murky from spring runoff can be key. Trout are coldblooded and may be slow to bite especially with low water temperatures, so it is important that they can also see your bait, lure, or fly.

While Vermont offers excellent and diverse fishing opportunities for wild trout, stocking also occurs in many lakes, ponds, streams, and rivers where wild trout populations are low or absent. This generally happens each year once the ice has melted and following spring runoff.

Good reminds anglers to check the department's website frequently as updates are made to the Trout Stocking page. Visit anrweb.vt.gov/FWD/ FW/FishStockingSchedule.aspx and click the "See What's Been Stocked" button to stay informed as the spring progresses. Also, check the 2024 Vermont Fishing Guide and Regulations, which is available free from license agents or online at eregulations.com/vermont/ fishing. A helpful overview of the fishing regulations can be found at vtfishandwildlife.com.

## Senior bowling roundup

• Week 14 of the winter/ spring season of the Brattleboro Senior Bowling League at Brattleboro Bowl on April 4 was postponed due to snow. They'll be back in action this week.

This section runs twice a month from March through June.

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